Charlton SPOTLIGHT

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Exploring the History of the Charlton Comics Group • Number 2 • Summer 2002 • $5.95

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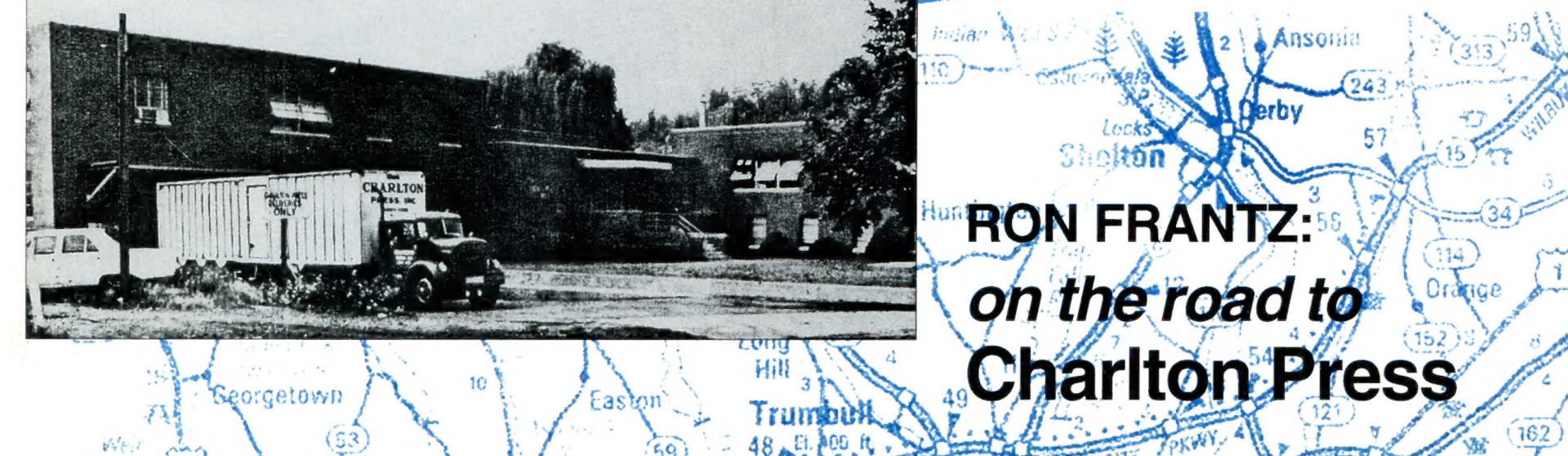
a conversation with AC Comics' BILL BLACK

the return of PAT BOYETTE

OF COURSE, SPIRITS AREN'T REALLY IN THE WORLD, ARE THEY?
PRESS BOX! YOU DIDN'T KNOW I WORKED FOR A NEWSPAPER?
THIS IS THE DAY, FOLKS! THE DAY SPEED KING BOB TISH IS SURE TO CINCH HIS PLACE IN THE HOT CAR HALL OF FAME! I'VE NEVER SEEN BOB SO CONFIDENT...
THERE 'S WALLET!
THANKS, HAL!
YOU HAVE ONLY FIVE MINUTES TO LIVE!

© Charlton Comics Group

RON FRANTZ: *on the road to* Charlton Press



Pat Boyette's preliminary sketch for a fully painted cover recreation of his original cover to **Peacemaker #1**. The final painting was left unfinished in his studio at the time of his death in January 2000. From a photocopy of the original art, courtesy of Don Mangus.
Illustration © 2002 Estate of Pat Boyette. Peacemaker TM & © 2002 DC Comics.
Inset: Doctor Graves, by Pat. © Charlton Comics Group.

Those lazy summer **Charlton** *days . . .*

WELCOME TO the second voyage of *Charlton Spotlight!* Like it says right on the masthead, we're here to explore the history of the Charlton Comics Group, late of Derby, Connecticut. We mean to look at the whole rainbow range of Charlton's comics line, from *Abbott & Costello* to *Zoo Funnies* and everything in between. There's no end to the fun and games to come—so stay with us and read on!

We have a jam-packed issue full of treats ahead of us. Kicking off the fun is our interview with **Bill Black**. Bill talks about his own AC Comics line and the original covers he drew for Charlton in the early 1980s, sharing loads of cool art. Next, **Ron Frantz**, who last issue told of working with Pat Boyette on the ACE Comics line, here gives us an exclusive look inside the walls of the Charlton building on the occasion of a business trip he made to Derby in 1987. Ever wanted to have lunch with Joe Gill? Ron did.

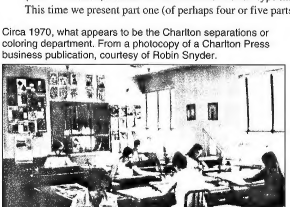
We continue the **Pat Boyette** story with an addenda section offering a clutch of newly discovered, unpublished, and downright obscure examples of great Boyette art, plus extensive new data supplementing Don Mangus's thorough index of Pat's work from last issue—and "Crater Kid" creator **Marty Baumann** checks in with a cogent memoir of collaborating with Pat on the latter's final comics work.

The comics world lost another giant when **John Buscema** passed away in January 2002. Our back cover showcases a rare *Nature Boy* cover in tribute to Big John. And as a special treat for Charlton fans, we present our first *Charlton Classic Reprint*, a rarely seen six-page story by one of the fathers of Superman, **Joe Shuster**, from an early issue of *Strange Suspense Stories*.

Next, writer **Ron Fortier** shares a memoir of his work with artist **Gary Kato** on their breakthrough into professional comics with the story they did for the short-lived ***Charlton Bullseye*** series (#3 happens to be the very last new Charlton comic I ever bought on the stands, and I picked it up solely for the Kato-Fortier piece) and their later creation of one of Charlton's last superheroes, **Mr. Jigsaw**. Gary generously executed a brand-new illustration of Jiggy for *Charlton Spotlight* when I was first planning the mag some two years ago; Ron and Gary would have been featured in #1 had not its focus suddenly shifted to Pat Boyette, who died unexpectedly while that issue was in production.

Following a leisurely stroll through some of the informative and entertaining letters we received in response to #1, and a rambling news and reviews section wherein we spotlight many of the cool new Charlton goings-on of the past year, we offer another installment of incredible arch-collector/indexer **Dan Stevenson's** Charlton data. Last issue we printed Dan's complete Charlton Comics checklist by title (with a total of 5,959 known comics and 61 comic-type magazines). This time we present part one (of perhaps four or five parts) of that checklist with data rearranged to show a year-by-year listing by title, with totals per year, along with our customary gallery of rare comics covers from that era.

Circa 1970, what appears to be the Charlton separations or coloring department. From a photocopy of a Charlton Press business publication, courtesy of Robin Snyder.



TOM SUTTON, 1937–2002. Just days before this issue went to press, I was shocked and saddened to learn of the sudden death of legendary comics artist-writer **Tom Sutton.** Tom died of an apparent heart attack and was found in his apartment, possibly at his drawing table, on or about May 1, 2002 (details are still sketchy), at age 65. Being the maverick, uncompromising talent that he was, there could perhaps be no better way to go—at his board, doing the work he loved. He will be sorely missed.

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Wild Bill *Speaks Out*

a conversation with **Bill Black**

interview conducted by **Ramon Schenk**

BILL BLACK, *comics artist, writer, and editor, is best known to Charlton Comics fans these days for heading up his own AC Comics line of classic golden age adventure and Western reprint books, as well as original superhero and good-girl titles. Bill has worked for nearly every major comics publisher over the past thirty years, including Dark Horse, Warren, Marvel, and Warp Graphics. From 1981 to 1983 he drew a handful of covers for some of Charlton's Western reprint books, representing the first new comics work that Charlton had published in years. Bill was also heavily involved in the company's fresh, experimental* Charlton Bullseye *comic series, as he relates below.*

Check out AC Comics at your local comics shop, write to P.O. Box 521216, Longwood, FL 32752-1216, or visit them at **www.accomics.com** *for their complete catalog of titles.*

Ramon Schenk, *our intrepid European correspondent and contributing editor, interviewed Bill by e-mail; Bill proofread the article.*

Charlton Spotlight*: *What was the first comic book you ever read or owned?

Bill Black: Probably *Durango Kid* #2. The earliest titles I collected were *All Star Comics* (DC), *Captain Marvel Adventures* (Fawcett), *Black Rider* (Marvel/Timely/Atlas), *Durango Kid* (Magazine Enterprises), *Daredevil Comics, Boy Comics, Black Diamond Western* (all Lev Gleason), and *Gunsmoke* (Youthful Magazines).

CS: *What was your first Charlton comic you can recall? How did it size up compared to other publishers?*

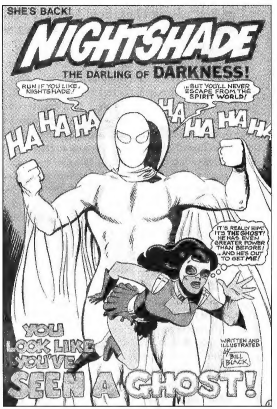
BB: Probably *Rocky Lane Western* #57, the second Charlton issue. That would be 1954. If I read an earlier Charlton it may have been *Atomic Mouse*. I liked the Charlton Rocky Lane over the previous Fawcett version because it was drawn by Dick Giordano, who did a great likeness of Rocky. I really loved Rocky Lane in the movies but never bought his Fawcett comic because I didn't like the art.

Charlton comics I have always considered inferior to the books of other companies mostly because the art and story never seemed to work together. Looking back, the pre-Code Charltons were very good, so I'm sure that the Code watered down the product. But in the case of *Rocky Lane Western*, it was as good as or better than other books and superior to the Fawcett version.

CS: *Which Charlton character or characters interest you the most? Do you have any personal favorites?*

BB: Like most everybody, I like the Charlton superheroes the best—Blue Beetle being the favorite, then Captain Atom. I liked Nightshade, too. If it was drawn by Steve Ditko or Jim Aparo, I bought it.

CS: *Let's talk about your art career and how you became a comics publisher. How did you end up as an artist?*


SHE'S BACK!
NIGHTSHADE
THE DARLING OF DARKNESS!
RUN IF YOU LIKE, NIGHTSHADE!
BUT YOU'LL NEVER ESCAPE THE SPIRIT WORLD!
HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA
IT'S REALLY HIS! IT'S THE GHOST! HE'S USED HIS CREATOR POWER THAN BEFORE! AND HE'S OUT TO GET ME!
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'VE SEEN A GHOST!
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY BILL BLACK

Bill's splash page to the first new Nightshade story from Charlton in more than a dozen years. From **Charlton Bullseye #7**, May 1982. © Charlton Comics Group. Nightshade TM & © 2002 DC Comics.

BB: I have a degree in art from Florida State University and have spent most of my life working as an artist, photographer, or art director.

CS: *You've drawn for Warren, Marvel, and Dark Horse, among other publishers. Can you tell us something about how you came to work for Charlton?*

BB: I knew Bill Pearson, an associate editor at Charlton. Previously he worked on *witzend* (Wallace Wood's mag) and we copublished *witzend* #11 (I think it was #11!). I also knew Don Newton. When Dan Reed, another Florida artist, went up to Derby to convince Charlton to bring back their superheroes, the *Charlton Bullseye* was born. I worked with Reed on *Bullseye* #1 and subsequent issues. Reed can be credited as singlehandedly bringing back the Charlton superheroes that last time.

CS: *Were there any special kinds of stories you wanted to work on at Charlton, or did you take what you could get?*

BB: At the time I worked with Charlton they were no longer doing new material because sales were too low (kind of like the way it is *today*!). They only did reprints. They kept the Westerns

alive because of a distribution deal they had in England. The Brits wanted a certain Charlton magazine but would only take it as part of a package deal with the Westerns. So to sell them the title that did make them money, they kept the Westerns alive. I asked to do covers for *Billy the Kid* and *Gunfighters*, their two last Western titles. I didn't have time to do more than that and, frankly, never thought of asking to do other covers!

CS: *How did you feel about the low page rates Charlton offered, and may I ask how much you were paid?*

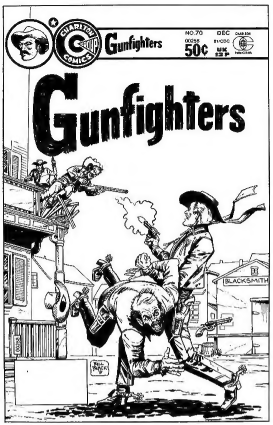
BB: I was paid *exactly* what the art was worth!

CS: *When did you start self-publishing, and what did you publish? The earliest work I've seen is mostly good-girl art such as* Femzine.

BB: I started self-publishing in 1969 while I was drawing for *Creepy* and *Eerie* for Warren. My first title was *Paragon Illustrated*, followed by *Captain Paragon, Tara on the Dark Continent, Paragon Super Heroes, Fem Fantastique, Macabre Western, Bizarre Thrills, Star Fems, Femzine*, and others I'm forgetting.

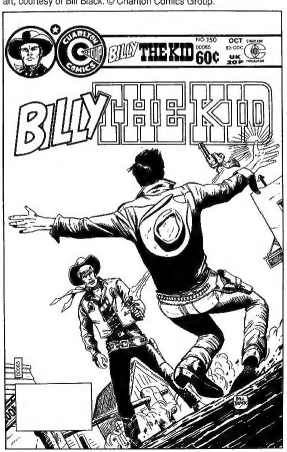
CS: *How did the arrangement come about through which you were able to publish Charlton characters in 1983, and how much freedom were you given?*

BB: Bill Pearson called saying he was shopping for a home for the *Charlton Bullseye* material that he had amassed . . . which



Gunfighters #70, December 1981. From a photocopy of the original art, courtesy of Bill Black. © Charlton Comics Group.

Billy the Kid #150, October 1982. From a photocopy of the original art, courtesy of Bill Black. © Charlton Comics Group.



was considerable. The book was canceled. I said I was interested but he said he was looking for a *color* publisher. I told him I was about to launch a color line—AC Comics—so it worked out. The legal work gave AC Comics the rights to the Charlton material for the year 1983.

I dealt with Bill Pearson, George Wildman, and the Charlton legal department. Pearson shipped me the unpublished *Bullseye* material along with names and addresses of the creators, all new guys. This worked out great for AC because I ended up hiring several of them to work at AC after the Charlton material was used up. I was supposed to use the material already created but I wanted much of this fixed. Some of it I re-inked. Some of it never got published because these guys took so long to get the material ready, the year ran out! Dan Reed was a particular problem. He had a second Captain Atom ready to fly but he was so pissed off at Charlton for canceling *Bullseye* that he wanted to change his ending. He wanted the Charlton characters killed off . . . in fact, if I remember correctly, he wanted to destroy the earth at the end of this story. He was upset. I didn't like that ending and thought Charlton wouldn't like it either. We argued. He procrastinated . . . the story still isn't finished!

CS: *How did you feel when you heard Charlton had sold the rights to many of "your" characters to DC? And how do you feel about the way they have been used by DC? Have you read* The L.A.W. *miniseries?*

BB: I knew that DC was interested in buying the Charlton

superheroes at that time. I believed that if DC did them, the characters would lose their uniqueness. I was right. I never considered them "my" characters. I just "leased" them for a year. I've never read the *L.A.W.* series.

CS: *Sometime during the 1980s you acquired the rights to several Charlton characters. There was Nyoka, the Jungle Girl and some Western characters. Can you tell us some more about that?*

BB: As the Charlton legal department put it, "AC Comics can do whatever they want with the characters."

CS: *Did this apply to* all *Charlton characters, or just the action heroes?*

BB: No, it only applied to the material that I bought. We did new Nyoka stories for a while but that went into reprint stories. Now Diamond cannot distribute enough copies of any AC title to make a profit if we bought *new* stories . . . so everything AC does is now reprint or done by staff. I'd love to do a new Rocky Lane story and maybe I will before I croak! Don Winslow I really like—the Fawcett Carl Pfeufer stories —so I sneak one in *Men of Mystery* every once in a while. I have *lots* more Don Winslow stories, but because he's not a superhero he has no popularity. We made one of his regular villains, Singapore Sal, a regular in the Femforce Universe. She has appeared in many new stories.

CS: *You also published reprints of some Charlton characters. How did you get the material? Were there any original art or stats to go along with the rights you bought?*

BB: Yes, photostats of complete issues came in large envelopes. These were "printed" proofs from the negatives and therefore were configured to press requirements. That is, page one contained pages 1, 32, 16, and 17 of the book. Each sheet had four pages out of reading order. They were cut apart and reconfigured for AC books. Actually they were shot again to our page size. Charlton had no original art with this deal, just flats of stats. I did obtain a two-part *Nyoka, the Jungle Girl* story of all-original art from an art dealer.

But mostly the art is obtained from the printed comic book pages. Greg Theakston (from Pure Imagination) has a secret process for bleaching out the color, leaving only the black lines. We retouch these pages for publication. All the stories we reprint are from my personal collection except for some loaned to me by Greg.

CS: *Could you go into this some more? You photocopy or scan the pages, and then—?*

BB: Comics are printed in four ink colors: magenta, cyan, yellow, and black. The original art was drawn with only black lines. The printer added the colors. Our task is to restore the printed page to as close to what the *original* art was as possible: black-and-white line art. Greg's process bleaches out the magenta, cyan, and yellow, leaving only the black line art. This is then photostatted by Greg and retouched. Printing in the 1940s and '50s for comics was very poor, so the stats need lots of retouching to approximate what the original art must have looked like. This is done with very fine-line brushes and should only be done by an *artist* . . . preferably an artist who can differentiate between *styles* of various artists. It is long, painstaking work and is also the reason why Greg's results in his publications and AC's results are superior to DC's.

Alternate, unpublished cover to **Americomics Special** #1, 1983, AC Comics' licensed revival of the Charlton action heroes before they were sold to DC. Compare with published version on our front cover. Art by Guler & Fugate from a photocopy of the original art, courtesy of Bill Black. © 1983 AC Comics. Characters TM & © 2002 DC Comics.

CS: *What titles is AC/Paragon currently publishing?*

BB: Currently we publish *Men of Mystery* (#35 is the latest), *Best of the West* (#27), *Femforce* (#116), *Bill Black's Fun Comics* (#2 of the second series), *All Hitler Comics* (a one-shot). Coming up is *Good Girl Art Quarterly* #19, *Femforce Special* #2 (all new art), *Femzine* with Fanny Phantom, *Big 'Uns* #2, *Western Movie Hero* #3, *TV Western* #1, and more Rocky Lane, Haunted Horseman, and Durango Kid. We may reprint *Black Phantom* #1, which has been sold out for years. And we're launching several new titles: *Fighting Yank* (retro 1954 hero), *America's Greatest Comics* (#'s 1 & 2 feature Ditko's *Mysterious Traveler* from Charlton), *Crime Comics* (celebrating the 60th anniversary of Biro's *Crime Does Not Pay*), and *Big Girl Adventures.*

CS: *Any more plans for Charlton reprints or projects with Charlton characters?*

BB: *Blazing Western* #2 featured a two-part Al Williamson Cheyenne Kid tale. There will be more Rocky Lane, Wild Bill Hickok (by Joe Maneely and by Al Williamson), Lash LaRue (by Pete Morisi), Tex Ritter, Nyoka, Nature Boy, and just maybe a pre-Ditko Blue Beetle! I have several of Ditko's *Mysterious Traveler* stories which will run in both *Men of Mystery* and *America's Greatest Comics.*

© 2002 Ramon Schenk

Bill Black's Charlton work

Checklist compiled by Michael Ambrose, Ramon Schenk, and Bill Black. All corrections and additions welcome!

Billy the Kid
145 Nov 1981 cover
147 Mar 1982 cover
150 Oct 1982 cover
151 Dec 1982 cover
153 Mar 1983 cover

Charlton Bullseye
1 Jun 1981 "Blue Beetle and Question" (inks p. 15 only)
7 May 1982 "You Look Like You've Seen a Ghost!" (6 pp); scr, p, inks [Nightshade]

Gunfighters
70 Dec 1981 cover
71 Feb 1982 cover
73 Jun 1982 cover
74 Sep 1982 cover
77 Feb 1983 cover
78 Apr 1983 cover

Bill says, "There were others . . . can't find them right now. Probably did *Billy* 148 & 149 (?) and *Gunfighters* 75 & 76(?)"

AC Comics reprints of Charlton stories

Following is a (very) partial checklist of AC Comics reprints of Charlton stories, compiled by Ramon Schenk, Michael Ambrose, and Bill Black. All corrections and additions welcome!

[Title / Issue / Year / Story Title / Creator(s) / Character / Orig. Appearance]

Amazon Warriors
1 1989 "The Jungle Jaundice" ?? Nyoka, the Jungle Girl ??
America's Greatest Comics
1 2002 "The Man Below" Steve Ditko Mysterious Traveler Tales of the Mysterious Traveler #5, 11/57
Best of the West
2 1998 "The Texas Killer!" Dick Giordano/Vince Alascia Rocky Lane Rocky Lane Western #71
Best of the West
4 1999 "The Alibi" ??/Tom Cooke/?? Rocky Lane ??
Best of the West
6 1999 "The Wrong Man!" ??/Dick Giordano/Vince Alascia Rocky Lane ??
Best of the West
9 2000 "Too Late Bandits" ??/Keats Petree/?? Sunset Carson Sunset Carson #??
Best of the West
13 2000 "Marshall Without a Gun" ??/Dick Giordano/?? Rocky Lane ??
Best of the West
17 2000 "Shanghaied!" Pete Morisi Lash LaRue ??
Bill Black's Fun Comics
2 2000 "You Look Like You've Seen a Ghost!" Bill Black Nightshade Charlton Bullseye #7, 5/82
Blazing Western
2 2000 "Geronimo, the War Chief of the Apaches" Al Williamson/Angelo Torres Cheyenne Kid Cheyenne Kid #??
Golden-Age Greats
4 1995 "The Viking Horde" ?? Ibis the Invincible Danger and Adventure #22?
Golden-Age Men of Mystery
8 1998 "The Menace of the Horror Weeds!" ?? Ibis the Invincible Whiz Comics #150, Oct.1952
Golden-Age Men of Mystery
14 1999 "Cry for Revenge" Dick Giordano/Vince Alascia Golden Arrow Cowboy Western #??
Golden-Age Men of Mystery
14 1999 "The Ghost Ship" ?? Ibis the Invincible Whiz Comics? #??
Golden-Age Men of Mystery
18 1999 "Yellowjacket!" ?? Yellowjacket ??
Golden-Age Men of Mystery
21 2000 "Moon Monsters!" Alex Blum Ibis the Invincible ??
Golden-Age Men of Mystery
22 2000 "Climbs Mt. Everest" Carl Pfeufer/John Jordan Don Winslow of the Navy ??
Golden-Age Men of Mystery
24 2000 "The Twist in Time" ?? Ibis the Invincible ??
Great American Western
2 1988 "Ambush at Sun-Up" John Severin Billy the Kid Billy the Kid #??
Jungle Girls
6 1992 "The Legend Hunter" Maurice Whitman Nyoka, the Jungle Girl ??
Jungle Girls
7 1992 "The Dancing Statues" ?? Nyoka, the Jungle Girl Master Comics #128
Jungle Girls
10 1992 "The Flying Snake" Max Elkans Nyoka, the Jungle Girl ??
Men of Mystery
32 2001 "The Mercury Man!" Rocke Mastroserio Mercury Man Space Adventures #44, 2/62
32 2001 "The Heel and the Healer" Steve Ditko Mysterious Traveler Tales of the Mysterious Traveler #7, 3/58
Roy Rogers Western
3 1999 "The Unlucky Horseshoes" ??/Leonard Frank/Leonard Frank Gabby Hayes ??
TV Western
1 2001 "Trapped in the Badlands" Joe Maneely Wild Bill Hickok & Jingles Cowboy Western Comics #67, 1957
Young Gun
1 1992 "The Crisis"; "Gambler's Greed!"; "El Chivito"; "Solid Gold Bait"; "The Kid's Last Meal" John Severin Billy the Kid Billy the Kid #??

Billy the Kid #151, December 1982
© Charlton Comics Group

Gunfighters #74, September 1982
© Charlton Comics Group

Best of the West #24, 2001
© 2001 AC Comics

RON FRANTZ

It's a long, long way to Derby . . .

LAST ISSUE, *longtime writer, publisher, and comics fandom historian Ron Frantz went into detail concerning his working relationship with Pat Boyette when Ron was publishing his ACE Comics line in the late 1980s. In this new installment of his ongoing Charlton memories for* Charlton Spotlight, *Ron recounts a trip he made to the Charlton offices and describes some of the fascinating characters he encountered along the way. . . .*

IN 1924, Lincoln Ellsworth sailed over the North Pole in a dirigible. Some years later the famed explorer mused over the events leading to his remarkable adventure when he wrote: "It is strange how often big ambitions of life find realization from very small happenings. A chance acquaintance, an item in the newspaper, may prove to have been turning-points in life if you take the trouble to trace things back to their beginnings."

Of course, most people never experience an adventure of that magnitude. We find our sense of wonder in less extravagant vehicles, sometimes in the most unlikely places. Take my own case as an example. In the summer of 1987 I traveled by car from Oklahoma City to faraway Derby, Connecticut, home of the legendary Charlton Comics Group. It is hard to compare that with a trek over the Arctic Circle in a hot-air balloon, but it's probably as close as I will ever come.

After all, it isn't every day that a sensible Oklahoman goes gallivanting halfway across the country to visit some near-moribund comic book publisher, or at least not without a good reason. Come to think of it, I had a pretty good reason. At the time I was publishing the black-and-white ACE Comics line. By coincidence I found myself working with talented artists and writers who had once wandered through the hallowed halls of Charlton: Steve Ditko, Pat Boyette, Frank McLaughlin, Joe Gill, and Pete Morisi.

Charlton hadn't published much in the way of comic books for the past few years, in fact had discontinued their comics line for good the year before, but they were still putting out several varieties of magazines. Pat Boyette once told me that Charlton killed its comics in the 1970s to finance *Hustler* magazine. Had I heard that story from anyone else, I might not have believed it. Boyette, however, was not a man who scattered his words rashly to the wind. Coming from Boyette, the story not only sounded plausible, but in all likelihood was factual. Charlton was something of a novelty in that they produced, printed, published, and distributed their own product under one roof. Charlton wasn't bothered much with outside interference. They were free to make their profits in that good, clean business of magazine publication and distribution.

So what did all that have to do with me? Good question. There I was . . . working my fingers to the bone publishing comic books that hardly anyone was buying. Across the board, comics sales were lagging. Those wonderful black-and-white comics that had once been so popular were slowly losing their appeal. There are a lot of reasons. Perhaps the most sensible explanation is that there were too many titles. The competition for buying dollars was fierce. Couple this with the fact that many of those comics were of poor quality, it came as no great surprise when people stopped buying them.

By the summer of 1987 I was struggling to stay in business. It looked as if my days as a comics publisher were numbered. One afternoon, Joe Gill mentioned in passing conversation that he had shown some of my ACE Comics titles to Ed Handi, General Manager of Capital Distributing. Capital was the distribution arm of Charlton. They were separate companies with the same owners. Handi seemed moderately impressed with the quality of my books and expressed an interest in distributing them, if I could make the transition from black and white to color.

The only problem was that Capital had recently signed a deal

with another small publisher, Spotlight Comics. As Handi explained the situation to me, they preferred not to introduce two new comic book lines into the distribution network at the same time. He asked if I would be willing to have my comics published under the Spotlight imprint. The deal called for separate accounting, with no commingling of funds. I would be paid for the comics I published and Spotlight would be paid for theirs.

Initially I wasn't very keen on the idea, but I was willing to discuss the possibility with the different people involved. Spotlight Comics was owned by a fellow named Richard Maurizio. I didn't know him, but Joe Gill and Frank McLaughlin seemed to think that he was an OK guy and that it would be in my best interests to do business with him. With some gentle persuasion from Joe and Frank, I talked to Maurizio on the phone a couple of times. He seemed friendly enough, so I was willing to begin serious negotiations.

As you might imagine, there were lots of details to work out. To begin with, contracts had to be negotiated with Maurizio, Capital Distributing, and a Wisconsin-based printer. Then there were other little details to arrange with some of the artists and writers I had been working with. Under the circumstances it seemed prudent to conduct much of this business in person. About this same time, I received an invitation to appear as a guest at the 1987 summer comicon in Chicago. Trying to fit everything into a very tight schedule, I planned a nine-day trip that would take me first to Connecticut, then back home by way of Chicago, with various stops on the way.

I STARTED out early on the morning of Saturday, June 24. After making a short stop at Little Rock, Arkansas, to visit a comic book shop, I hit the road again, heading east toward New Jersey. While making a stop for gas about halfway between Memphis and Nashville, I had a chance meeting with the Rev. Jesse Jackson. One thing about traveling is that you never know who you might run into. Jackson was traveling in a Rolls Royce with a bodyguard and two women who obviously were not their wives. I couldn't help but ponder that oath of poverty one ordinarily associates with a man of the cloth. Oh, well. I figure Jackson must have belonged to a less conservative denomination.

Steve Ditko's action-filled cover to **ACE Comics Presents** #1, May 1987. From a photocopy of the original art, courtesy of & © 1987, 2002 Ron Frantz.

After more than twenty-four hours on the road, I spent a night at the home of former *MAD* magazine associate editor Jerry De Fuccio. I had a pleasant visit with Jerry, who took great pleasure showing me his wonderful collection of original comic book art. I got in a few hours of badly needed sleep and took off the next morning for an afternoon visit with Steve Ditko at his Manhattan studio.

Driving in New York City isn't exactly what I call fun. I came through the Holland Tunnel from Jersey, which drops you off in the middle of Times Square. I managed to get thoroughly lost in almost no time. After driving around in circles for a half-hour or so, I finally had sense enough to ask for directions. I pulled up to a stoplight and asked a cab driver in the next lane how to get to get where I was going. He give me very good directions and it didn't take me long to find the building where Ditko worked.

Now, if there is anything worse than driving in Manhattan, it's trying to find a place to park. There must be a dozen cars roaming the streets for every available parking place. After cruising around for ten or fifteen minutes, I finally pulled into a parking garage several blocks away. It was a tough-looking neighborhood. Judging by some of the interesting people I passed on the street, I wouldn't have cared to walk around there after dark.

Meeting Ditko at his studio was a novel experience. Ditko isn't much for social amenities; my guess is he didn't get too many visitors. Ditko was about sixty at the time of our visit. His attire was casual. He was pale, tall, thin, and balding and wore thick glasses.

When I arrived Ditko had been working on one of his own stories, featuring characters he had created. Most of these stories had strong philosophical themes. I gather Ditko busied himself working on them when he didn't have a job drawing for someone else. He showed me a stack of finished pages that must have been three feet high, awaiting future publication. Ditko was very interested in my potential newsstand distribution deal with Charlton. In recent years, a few small companies had published

some of his philosophical stories, and Ditko hoped I might be able to publish more of them to a potentially wider audience.

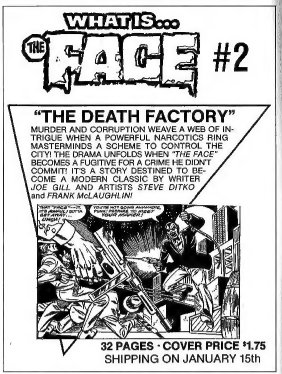
There was only one chair in the studio and that was the one Ditko sat on while drawing. So we spent the visit entire standing. For some odd reason, his office had no ventilation. Not so much as an open window. Being the middle of summer it was ghastly hot in there, but Ditko didn't seem to notice. I was soaking wet with perspiration while he seemed cool as a cucumber.

I chatted with Ditko for a couple of hours, discussing a variety of subjects. His primary interest in life seemed to be the Objectivist philosophy espoused by the late writer Ayn Rand. Ditko took great pleasure in showing me his collection of books and literature on the subject. Although I enjoyed reading some of Rand's novels, I didn't share Ditko's opinion that Objectivism was a viable solution to all the world's problems. When I expressed that sentiment, he seemed a little anxious to cut the visit short. I took my cue that it was time to leave and asked Ditko for directions to the Central Expressway to Connecticut. He didn't have a clue. Like many New Yorkers, Ditko depended on the subway to get where he needed to go. Pulling out onto the street, I chanced upon a police officer on horseback who was kind enough to point me in the right direction.

MY NEXT stop was the home of Frank McLaughlin in Stratford, Connecticut. Frank had given me directions to his house, but as usual my sense of direction proved to be woefully inadequate. I ended up on the opposite side of town, totally lost. I gave Frank a call. Frank offered to come and get me, which I very much appreciated.

McLaughlin went out of his way to make me comfortable. You couldn't ask for a more gracious host. I spent a lot of time visiting with Frank while he worked at his drawing board. Many old-time Charlton fans remember McLaughlin as the artist-writer of *Judomaster* back in the '60s. Frank kept busy with inking jobs for DC and other publishers. He worked quite a bit with Dick Giordano. Among other things, Frank had been working on a proposed *Judomaster* revival, which, sadly, has never seen the light of day. The completed pages Frank showed me were fascinating.

The next day, Frank took time away from his busy schedule to drive me over to Derby and introduce me to some of the people at Charlton. I wasn't exactly expecting Camelot, but my first sight of the Charlton building was something of a disappointment. There was nothing special about the building, which showed definite signs of age. It looked like a typical old industrial warehouse, a little dirty and run-down. The building was a little nicer on the inside. The floor looked like it had been recently swept. The atmosphere inside seemed bright and comfortable.


WHAT IS...
THE FACE #2
"THE DEATH FACTORY"
MURDER AND CORRUPTION WEAVE A WEB OF INTRIGUE WHEN A POWERFUL NARCOTICS RING MASTERMINDS A SCHEME TO CONTROL THE CITY! THE DRAMA UNFOLDS WHEN "THE FACE" BECOMES A FUGITIVE FOR A CRIME HE DIDN'T COMMIT! IT'S A STORY DESTINED TO BECOME A MODERN CLASSIC BY WRITER JOE GILL AND ARTISTS STEVE DITKO and FRANK McLAUGHLIN!
32 PAGES · COVER PRICE $1.75
SHIPPING ON JANUARY 15th

Advance publicity sheet for **What Is The FACE #2**, May 1987, courtesy of Ron. The FACE TM & © 2002 Ron Frantz.

As Frank and I walked through the building, we passed through an office filled with secretaries. They were all busy working on stacks of paper piled high on the desks. Everyone in the building seemed to know Frank, as most of the people who worked at Charlton had been around for years. I got the impression that it was a pleasant place to work, judging from the smiles on people's faces.

Walking down a hallway toward the front of the building, we stopped at an office where Frank introduced me to Ed Handi. Handi appeared cordial, but he struck me as a hard-nosed kind of manager. He didn't waste time with idle conversation or similar pleasantries. Handi had his hands full with a problem of some sort. I gather some kind of labor trouble was gumming up the works. He apologized and asked if it would be possible for me to come back the next day. Of course that was no problem. We agreed on a time convenient for him.

From there, Frank and I walked over to Joe Gill's office, located toward the front of the building. It was a pleasure to meet Joe in person after talking to him so many times on the phone. Since it was getting close to lunch time, Joe invited Frank and me to join him for a bite to eat at a nearby seafood restaurant. I had a nice catfish dinner while both Joe and Frank enjoyed generous helpings of steamed clams.

While we were having lunch, two men stopped by on their way out to say hello. Gill introduced one of them as Charles Santangelo, the owner of Charlton and Capital

A look inside the administrative workings of Charlton Press, circa 1970. From a photocopy of a Charlton Press business publication, courtesy of Robin Snyder.

Distributing. No one bothered to introduce the other man, who appeared to be Santangelo's bodyguard. I can't be positive of that, but the revolver hidden under his jacket seemed a pretty good indication. Santangelo was dressed in a tailor-made suit and silk tie. Judging by his appearance, he was a man accustomed to the finer things in life. Santangelo seemed pleasant enough but there was something about him that made you want to count your fingers after shaking hands.

For years, there have been rumors (spoken in hushed whispers) that Charlton was owned by people associated with organized crime. Personally, I wouldn't doubt it. Just about everyone I've known who worked for Charlton has alluded to the possibility. I suspect some of them knew more than they cared to discuss. It is easy to understand their reluctance to talk about it, as no sane person wants to incur the displeasure of mobsters. One has visions of ending up in a river bottom with an earful of bullets.

I joined Frank and Joe later for an evening's entertainment at the local jai alai games. It proved to be an interesting experience as I had never seen the game played. As in horse racing, spectators wager on the outcome of the games. I ended up losing about $50 during the course of the evening, but I had a good time once I got into the spirit of things. Frank and Joe, who were both regulars at the event, walked away marginal winners.

EARLY THE next morning, I drove back over to Derby from McLaughlin's home. Frank was busy working on an art job so I had to make the drive by myself. Besides making one wrong turn that took me a few miles out of the way, I managed to get there without any problem.

When I arrived at Handi's office he thanked me for being on time. Handi was all business. We talked for over an hour, most of it discussing minute details about magazine distribution. Naturally I had a few questions, which Handi answered to my satisfaction. I found it interesting that Capital required a minimum print run of 100,000. Capital used a shotgun technique for magazine distribution. They more or less flooded the newsstands with copies, with little or no promotion, hoping they would sell. Handi said that a 50 percent return of unsold copies was not uncommon. That figure sounded a little high to me but I presume that Handi knew what he was talking about, or at least I hoped so.

Finally, Handi handed me a contract. He said it was the "standard" contract that Capital used with most of its clients. I looked it over for a few minutes and said: "This looks fine, but if you don't mind, I'll take it home with me. I'd like my accountant and attorney to look it over before I sign." Handi didn't seem to have a problem with that. We shook hands and I told him that he would hear from me in a week or two.

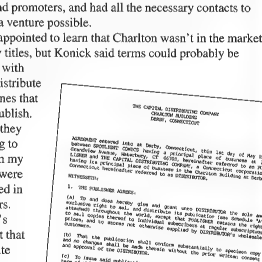
Then I walked over to Joe Gill's office. Joe was anxious to hear how things had gone during my meeting with Handi. He seemed pleased when I told him that the meeting went as well as could be expected. There were still some details to work out. Among other things, I still had to sign a formal contract with Spotlight Comics to finalize the deal. I had originally planned to meet that same day with Spotlight publisher Richard Maurizio, but he had to cancel out at the last minute because of some personal problem. We made arrangements to meet at the Chicago con.

I had one more meeting to attend, with Ed Konick, General Manager of Charlton Publications. From what I could see, Charlton didn't seem to be publishing anything besides a few magazines. Before walking me over to Konick's office, Gill opened the door to a large closet and suggested that I look inside. Much to my surprise, the closet contained shelves loaded with hundreds of bound volumes of comic books Charlton had published from the 1950s to the 1970s. The books were bound in an inexpensive library cloth and looked pretty ordinary. However, the contents were quite extraordinary. It was one of those rare moments when one would have liked to be frozen in time, to browse through that incredible library at leisure. As much as I would have liked to linger in there, it was necessary to take care of business.

After Joe made the necessary introductions, he excused himself and went back to his own office. I liked Konick. He seemed like a decent man and I enjoyed talking with him. I had a few ideas for new magazine titles that I wanted to bounce off of Konick, which I had already discussed with Joe Gill. For one, I wanted to produce a new humor magazine along the lines of *MAD*, to be edited and packaged by Jerry De Fuccio. My tentative idea was to mix new material with pieces that Charlton had previously published in *Sick* magazine.

Another possibility was a professional wrestling magazine with an emphasis on nostalgia. I had recently met Danny Hodge, a living legend among amateur and professional wrestling fans. The college wrestling equivalent of the Heisman Trophy is named the Hodge Award in his honor. Hodge was interested in helping me produce the magazine, which in all likelihood would have had his name on it. Hodge knew all of the big-name wrestlers and promoters, and had all the necessary contacts to make such a venture possible.

I was disappointed to learn that Charlton wasn't in the market for any new titles, but Konick said terms could probably be worked out with Capital to distribute any magazines that I cared to publish. In essence, they were willing to gamble with my money but were not interested in risking theirs. Actually, it's hard to fault that kind of astute business sense. Konick was kind of blunt about it. He said Charlton had been losing money in recent years publishing magazines and was in the process of getting out of



THE CAPITAL DISTRIBUTING COMPANY
CHARLTON BUILDING
DERBY, CONNECTICUT

AGREEMENT entered into at Derby, Connecticut, this 1st day of May 1967 between CHARLTON PUBLICATIONS, INC., a corporation duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of Connecticut, hereinafter referred to as the PUBLISHER, and THE CAPITAL DISTRIBUTING COMPANY, a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Connecticut, hereinafter referred to as DISTRIBUTOR.

WITNESSETH:

1. THE PUBLISHER AGREES:

(a) To and does hereby give and grant unto DISTRIBUTOR the sole and exclusive right to sell, distribute and obtain the publication for Schedule 'A' attached hereto throughout the world, except that PUBLISHER does not grant the right to sell copies thereof to institutional subscribers or regular subscription persons, and to stores and otherwise supplied by DISTRIBUTOR'S wholesale customers.

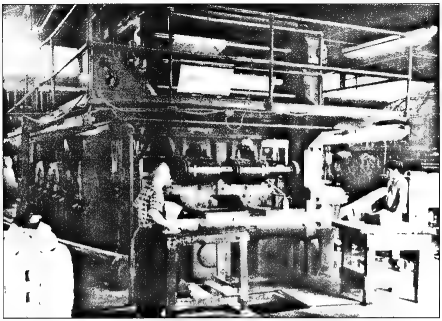
(b) That the publication shall conform substantially to specimen copy and no change shall be made therein without the prior written consent and approval of the DISTRIBUTOR.

(c) To issue said publication at least six (6) times per year during the term of this contract.

(d) The PUBLISHER shall, all at its own cost and expense, print and prepare for sale and delivery to the DISTRIBUTOR the specified number of copies of each issue of said publication provided for herein. PUBLISHER shall not be responsible to the DISTRIBUTOR for any copies that are returned in the same condition as when delivered, and shall pay all transportation charges on such returns. PUBLISHER shall not be obligated to deliver the full number of copies of any issue otherwise agreed, or mutually agreed number of copies thereof, if DISTRIBUTOR shall fail to make payment in full for all copies theretofore actually delivered, and shall be under no obligation to deliver copies to DISTRIBUTOR in any of the following circumstances: in case of fire, flood, strikes, or other unavoidable accidents.

(e) That PUBLISHER shall render invoices to the DISTRIBUTOR for all copies of said publication delivered to DISTRIBUTOR'S specifications at the price agreed upon. Every three periods of sales of seven (7) issues at the rate of ten cents (10¢) per copy, subject to the deductions as hereinafter provided, DISTRIBUTOR shall pay to PUBLISHER the sum of Two Hundred Fifty Dollars ($250.00) less all returned and unsold full copies, items or copies, headings and/or affidavits, etc. at the rate equal to forty three percent (43%) of cover price.

The first page of Capital Distributing's contract with Spotlight Comics. From the original document, courtesy of Ron Frantz.



One of the web presses at Charlton churns out four-color wonderment, circa 1970. From a photocopy of a Charlton Press business publication, courtesy of Robin Snyder.

the business. Evidently there was more money to be made in distribution.

During that time frame, Charlton had been selling rights to their old comic book titles, engaging an agent for that purpose. The more desirable characters and titles had already been sold, but I was interested in seeing what was left. While we were walking through the warehouse, I asked Konick if it was possible to see the famous Charlton "cereal box" cover press. He seemed a little amused that I was interested and pointed it out. It was obvious the old press hadn't been used for a long time. It stood alone in a corner, rusting away and gathering dust. I imagine it ended up abandoned in some pile of scrap metal, an ungracious ending for an instrument that created so much joy and entertainment for millions of readers. Such a situation leaves little doubt that sentiment and business make for strange bedfellows.

Finally, we ended up in the back of the warehouse where Charlton kept the black-and-white proofs for the thousands of comic books they had published, along with what remained of the original art. There was actually more art there than I expected. Most of the "good stuff" had long since been destroyed, thrown away, or stolen. However, there was still a lot of interesting original art to look at. There were several large stacks containing hundreds of pages from the romance, war, Western, and hot rod titles. I remember seeing several nice Jack Keller pages of the racing car variety. Lord only knows where that art is now, if it survived at all.

On top of one stack was a complete *Fightin' Five* story by Bill Montes and Ernie Bache. It might well have been unpublished. It seemed like a miracle that no one had bothered to take it. Then, while rooting through another stack, I stumbled across two unpublished Pete Morisi pages from the final issue of *Vengeance Squad*. The two pages had been deleted from the issue to publish a reader survey. Later, when I showed the pages to Konick, he looked at them with complete disinterest, telling me to take them home if I wanted them. Naturally I took advantage of his generosity.

Then I made a remarkable discovery. While sorting through a large pile of stats from the Hanna-Barbera titles Charlton had published, I stumbled across the stats to some (if not all) of the Charlton "action hero" titles published in the '60s. These were the characters Charlton had sold to DC Comics a few years earlier, including Blue Beetle, Captain Atom, Peacemaker, and Judomaster.

It came as quite a surprise, as I assumed that material had gone to DC at the time of the sale. That evening, McLaughlin and I visited with former Charlton editor Dick Giordano, who was then vice-president of DC. When I mentioned the discovery to Dick his face lit up like a beacon. According to Dick, Charlton claimed the stats had been lost. I reassured Dick that the stats were indeed there and I told him exactly where to find them. Dick said DC would send a representative over to Charlton in the next few days to pick up the stats. I assume DC did, but I never heard anything more about it.

I LEFT McLaughlin's home in the early afternoon and spent the next few hours driving to Philadelphia. I had made arrangements to meet with Billy Dee and the Big Edsel Band, who were appearing at the Bent Elbow club. I had recently published the first (and only) issue of *The Big Edsel Band*, featuring story and art by McLaughlin.

As usual I miscalculated the driving time and arrived several hours early. I asked several people around the club when they expected Billy Dee to arrive. They informed me that the band usually didn't appear until a few minutes before show time, so I decided to kill some time by having a couple of drinks in the bar. Then the most peculiar thing happened while I was sitting at the bar. Without any warning, a complete stranger grabs my shoulder, spins me around and tells me to "get the hell out of my club!" Talk about an awkward situation. I looked up at him, somewhat in a state of shock. Then he says: "Are you hard of hearing? Get the hell out of here NOW before I kick your butt into the street!"

He looked like the kind of man who had bounced a few drunks when the situation called for it. Lacking good sense, I looked the fellow in the eye and said, "I've been thrown out of better places than this in my time, but before we start busting knuckles, would you mind telling me what this is all about?" By this time, the fellow looked like he was ready to explode. Using a choice selection of four-letter words, he went into a tirade about how this was the last time I was going to "steal" an act away from his club!

Suddenly it occurred to me that this was a case of mistaken identity. I said, "Wait a minute. I think you have me confused with somebody else. This is the first time I have ever been in this club. In fact, it's the first time I've been in Philadelphia. I'm from Oklahoma. I just published a comic book about the Big Edsel Band. Billy Dee and the guys in the band are expecting me." For a moment, I wasn't sure if I was getting through to him. Then, without saying a word, he turned and walked away. Discretion being the better part of valor, I thought it best to get

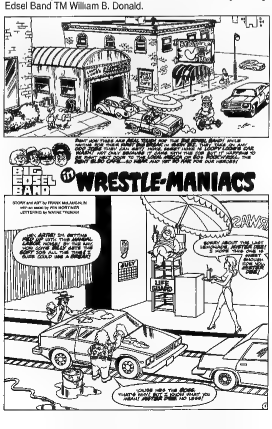
lost for a while. I asked the bartender where I could find a good place to eat. It happened that there was an Italian restaurant in the same building, which worked out just fine.

I had a nice meal. When I asked for the check, the waiter told me that it had already been taken care of. It seemed that the same guy owned both the restaurant and the club. A few minutes later, the owner walked up to my table and introduced himself, then apologized for the "misunderstanding." I told him to forget it, no harm was done . . . at least not to me. Actually, I was just glad to escape from the predicament with my teeth still intact.

Billy Dee finally showed up an hour or so later. He invited me to his dressing room and we visited for a while, waiting for the rest of the band to arrive. One by one they trickled in, except for one guy who had car trouble. When the time rolled around for the band to go on, they were still one man short. Ten or fifteen minutes later the owner of the club came in, insisting that the band go on, ready or not. The club was full of paying customers who were getting very impatient. I'm not sure if he was serious, but Billy asked me: "You don't happen to play rhythm guitar, do you?" Unfortunately I didn't, but it sure made me wish that I did. Finally, some guy who played with a different group offered to fill in and the band went on.

Billy was nice enough to arrange for me to sit in the back of the club with the technicians who handled the lights and the sound system. I probably had the best seat in the house. The Big Edsel Band put on a good show, performing '50s and '60s rock-and-roll songs. Since all good things must come to an end, about 2:00 A.M. I said a fond farewell to Billy Dee and the boys and hit the road for Chicago.

Splash page to **Big Edsel Band** #1, September 1987, by Frank McLaughlin and Win Mortimer. From a photocopy of the original art, courtesy of Ron Frantz. © 1987, 2002 Frank McLaughlin. Big Edsel Band TM William B. Donald.



JUST IN case you ever consider making the drive, it's a long, hard run between Philadelphia and Chicago. I pretty much drove straight through and arrived at the hotel about 5:00 P.M. the following afternoon. Needless to say, I was exhausted. After checking in to my room, I wandered into the hotel for a bite to eat, then went back to the room and crashed, feeling as if I had just run the Boston Marathon.

I looked around the hotel early the next morning for someone affiliated with the convention. I finally located an official, who informed me that the table I had been promised was not in the main dealers' room but was located in a different room. Swell. Had I known that, I probably wouldn't have bothered to set up. Except for a dozen or so exhibitors the room was virtually empty. Frankly, I had better things to do than sit in there and twiddle my thumbs. So I put up a sign offering complimentary copies of the different comics I had published and headed for the dealers' room.

Cover to **What Is The FACE** #3, August 1987, by Alex Toth From the color key proof courtesy of Ron Frantz The FACE TM & © 2002 Ron Frantz.

As I started to walk in, I was stopped by a convention worker who informed me that I first had to buy a ticket, pointing to a long line. I told him I was there as a guest of the convention but it went in one ear and out the other. Once again, he told me I had to buy a ticket before I would be admitted to the dealers' room. At that point I got a little testy and demanded to see the convention chairman. About ten minutes later, the chairman (Bob Weinberg) showed up, apparently annoyed that I would bother him with such a trifle. Those people in Chicago were not very hospitable, but at least I got into the dealers' room without buying a ticket.

Inside it was a regular mob scene. People were jammed into that room like sardines. You couldn't walk two feet without bumping into someone. It was a feeding frenzy around the tables. I never saw so much pushing and shoving in all my life. Anyone who stood between a buyer and a bargain was likely to get trampled. I can't imagine a street market in Algiers being much worse.

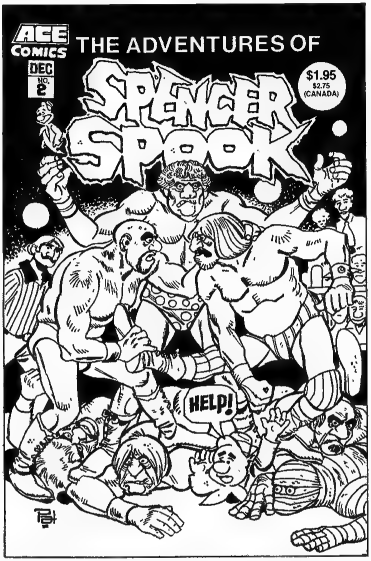
After an hour or two of weaving in and out of that crowd, I needed a break. On my way out I ran into Dick Giordano, who joined me for lunch. We had been visiting for a few minutes when DC Comics editor Julius Schwartz walked up to the table

and sat down without an invitation. Then he started talking to Giordano as if I were not there. I think Dick was a little embarrassed. He tried to smooth things over by making introductions, but it didn't help much. Schwartz acted as if my presence at the table was a personal annoyance. When it finally occurred to him that I wasn't going anywhere, he left rather abruptly. I don't mind telling you that his rude behavior didn't endear him to me. However, giving him the benefit of the doubt, maybe Schwartz was having a bad hair day or something. One never knows about those things.

A bit later in the afternoon, I finally located Richard Maurizio. We needed to find a quiet place to talk business, so I suggested the hotel bar. We had a very pleasant meeting, comparing notes and talking shop. Maurizio told me about his publishing plans. He had recently licensed comic book rights to the old Terrytoons cartoon characters, including *Mighty Mouse* and *Heckle and Jeckle*. He planned on publishing several comics featuring the characters. As for myself, I wanted to publish six bimonthly titles: *Spencer Spook, The Big Edsel Band, Robin Red and the Lutins, The FACE, The Skyman,* and a revival of Charlton's old *Space Western* title.

As we talked, there seemed to be no conflict between us. We agreed our combined titles had potential for merging into a respectable comics line. We discussed other matters, like exchanging ads, staggering printing schedules to reduce shipping costs, and working together to advertise and promote our comic book titles. In theory, it all sounded very practical. We reached a verbal agreement, then shook hands on the deal. Since we were both anxious to get started, Maurizio said his attorney would send me a working contract in a few days.

After meeting with Maurizio, I sat down in the hotel lobby to collect my thoughts. It had been a wild day. While relaxing in an overstuffed chair, two young men walked up and introduced themselves as Rick Altergott and Dan Clowes. I had the pleasure of working with them on several ACE titles. They were then at the beginnings of careers that would bring them fame and recognition. (Clowes recently received an Oscar nomination, best adapted screenplay, for *Ghost World.)* Visiting in my hotel room, I showed them the original art to a couple of 1950s war stories that I had bought from a dealer, and the stats to *Space Western* that I had picked up at Charlton. We had a great time gabbing since we were all fans at heart. Later on, after Clowes and Altergott had left, I walked out to the pool area to smoke a cigar. I ended up visiting with Kitchen Sink publisher Denis Kitchen, and Bud Plant, which made for a pleasant end to a very hectic day.



Cover for **Adventures of Spencer Spook** #2, December 1986, by the inimitable Pat Boyette. From a photocopy of the original art, courtesy of Ron Frantz. Spencer Spook TM & © 1986, 2002 Ron Frantz.

ABOUT NOON the next day, I checked out of the hotel and drove to Port Washington, Wisconsin, to pick up copies of *Return of the Skyman* #1, which had just come off the press. The printer was chomping at the bit to get the print job for my "new" line of color comics. They had been printing a magazine for a major publisher and, as circumstance would have it, had recently lost the contract. As a result, they were sitting on a large quantity of paper. For this reason they were willing to broker the printing cost for six comics in lieu of an exclusive one-year contract. Call it a once-in-a-lifetime offer. It never gets any sweeter than that.

I finally got back home on July 4, 1987. I waited for the contracts from Maurizio. As the days turned into weeks, I felt a sense of foreboding. Something had gone wrong, but I didn't know what. Finally, I called Maurizio to ask what was going on. With some hesitation, he explained that he had been busy with other matters and said I could expect the contract in a few days. That few days stretched into several weeks. Then, at long last, the contract arrived. As I read through it, I felt as if I had stepped into the Twilight Zone. The terms were as different as night and day from what Maurizio and I had agreed on in Chicago. To begin with, it specified that I would be limited to publishing two titles instead of six, and one them had to be McLaughlin's *Big Edsel Band.* Next, I would be forced to surrender editorial control of those titles to Maurizio. I don't know why, but he had a real problem with my working with Steve Ditko. He said he would

not publish any comic book drawn by Ditko. I guess there's no accounting for personal taste.

Maurizio also said I couldn't publish *Space Western* because he had "dibs" on all of Charlton's material. Of course that was pure nonsense. Then he warned me not to discuss any magazine publishing/distribution deals with Handi or Konick without his express consent. It seems he had similar plans himself. Finally, Maurizio demanded an obscene percentage of any profits.

Putting it mildly, I was just a little hot under the collar. When I voiced my disapproval to Maurizio, I felt as if I were talking to a complete stranger. The only explanation he would offer is that he had recently taken on some new financial backers, and "they" insisted on the new terms. Exercising great restraint, I reminded him that our verbal agreement called for considerably different terms. At that point Maurizio gave me a "take it or leave it" proposition. He didn't seem to care much one way or the other.

To make a long story short, I sent a letter to Maurizio, more or less telling him to go fornicate with a duck. I had no intention of doing business with him under those conditions, at that time or ever. I sent a copy to Ed Handi, along with a note explaining the situation. As things worked out, that letter killed the deal. Handi, for whatever reason, was unwilling to discuss a separate distribution deal with me. After a couple of unreturned phone calls I knew that future communication with him would be a waste of time. I had no choice but to wash my hands of the matter, much to my chagrin. I suspect there was more going on between Handi and Maurizio than I knew about, not that it matters much now.

LOOKING BACK at the experience from fifteen mileposts down the road, I realize that my soured deal with Capital probably worked out for the best. Besides a little aggravation, I walked away from the incident relatively unscathed, losing only a little time and money. Under the circumstances I figure it could have been a lot worse. Later, I heard from a reliable source that Maurizio ended up losing his shirt on that distribution deal. Supposedly there had been some curious accounting procedures used, making it virtually impossible for Maurizio to determine how many Spotlight comics were actually sold. Capital's sales figures were said to be conservative. I guess the truth of the matter depends on whom one cares to believe. I certainly didn't shed any tears about it. For me, it was one of those true-to-life situations that inclines one to believe in providence.

A few years later, both Capital and Charlton were out of business. The Charlton building at Derby is gone. Rumor has it that the real estate was worth considerably more than what remained of a once proud publishing and distribution empire, and if you drive down Division Street today you'll find a stretch of fast-food joints and strip malls where the Charlton compound once flourished. Little remains now of Charlton except for stacks of musty back issues, lurking in private collections. However, strange as it might sound, some of us still fondly remember those halcyon days when Charlton purveyed wonder in the form of poorly printed twelve-cent comic books. Maybe that's the way it should be.

© 2002 Ron Frantz

Cover for **The New Adventures of Judo Joe** #1, October 1987, by Frank McLaughlin. From a photocopy of the original art, courtesy of & © 1987, 2002 Ron Frantz.

Advance publicity sheet for **Fantastic Adventures** #1. Cover by Pete Morisi. Courtesy of & © 2002 Ron Frantz.

COMING IN MARCH
FROM ACE COMICS
COLLECTOR'S ISSUE
$1.75 COVER
FANTASTIC ADVENTURES
COVER PRICE $1.75
32 PAGES OF STORY AND ART!
SHIPPING ON MARCH 6th
FEATURING: "THE KILLERS FROM OUTER SPACE"...
AN UNPUBLISHED 1955 CLASSIC BY GEORGE TUSKAI
THE GOLDEN AGE OF COMICS LIVES AGAIN!
THRILL TO FOUR GREAT ACTION EPICS FROM THE GOLDEN AGE, FEATURING THE ARTISTIC WIZARDRY OF:
• FRED GUARDINEER • ROCKE MASTROSERIO
• FLETCHER HANKS
and...A PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED 1955 SPECTACULAR BY THE GREAT GEORGE TUSKAI DON'T MISS IT!

Working with Pat

by Marty Baumann

I EDIT, write and design "The Astounding B Monster," a Web site that profiles the people behind the classic B-movies of the 1940s, '50s, and '60s. Not many people realize that Pat Boyette wrote, directed and produced a handful of low-budget films in the early '60s. I originally contacted Pat because one of his films, *The Dungeons of Harrow*, a threadbare thriller filmed entirely in his beloved home town of San Antonio, was something of a cult classic. ("I wrote it, edited it and scored it—I put some names in there that I made up so it wouldn't look like one guy [did it all]," he told me.)

We were introduced by our mutual friend Jim Steranko. I was initially a little nervous about contacting Pat. He had only recently been diagnosed with cancer, had just completed an arduous course of chemotherapy, and I didn't want to intrude on his privacy. I was impressed with his openness, his humility and humor. Within the first five minutes of our conversation I knew I had a friend.

There was a lot more to Pat than his comics work would indicate. He was an author, producer, director, archaeologist, historian (when we first spoke, he'd recently completed a volume on Texas history), a television news anchor and radio broadcaster. And despite a voice ravaged by sickness, Pat was a tireless and generous raconteur. Over the course of several years we discussed everything from his theories regarding ancient Egypt to why he thought ink wash looked better on Xeroxed paper.

What might impress comics fans more than any of these attributes was the way Pat got into the four-color field in the first place—he simply decided to do it. He got tired of television news and decided he wanted to draw comic books. He submitted samples and the rest is Charlton history.

When my friendship with Pat began I was writing and drawing a backup feature for *Steve Conley's Astounding Space Thrills.* My character, Jet Victor, was a no-nonsense star pilot, sort of a Sgt. Rock in outer space, an homage to vintage science fiction. I'd drawn three stories when it struck me that Pat would be a natural choice to illustrate a fourth. I drafted a script, sent it to Pat along with the sparest of model sheets and gave him complete freedom to extrapolate and fill in the blanks. He loved my story and gamely tackled the assignment, humbly warning me in advance that the medication he was taking left his hand a bit less steady than it had been in his prime. (Let me make it clear, throughout the course of his sickness, Pat never exhibited the slightest hint of self-pity. "My bags are packed," he joked

Galaxy-Sized Astounding Space Thrills #1, October 2001, from Image Comics. TM & © 2001, 2002 Steve Conley.

Left: Two exquisite pages that look even better in color from "The Pilgrim's Wake," by Marty Baumann and Pat Boyette, from **Galaxy-Sized Astounding Space Thrills #1**. Courtesy of & © 2001, 2002 Marty Baumann.

Opposite: *Sissies stay home!* Rarely seen poster advertising Pat's 1962 film **The Weird Ones**, courtesy of Bill Fields and Don Mangus. © 1962, 2002 Estate of Pat Boyette

philosophically.) He turned in a terrific job. New Boyette artwork would be in print after far too long an absence.

Before the story ran, *Astounding Space Thrills* was picked up by Image Comics. This meant all-new, color stories, and a backup spot wherein I could promote my full-color, online strip, "The Crater Kid." Pat's "Jet Victor" story, rendered entirely in gray wash, would have to wait for a black-and-white collection of the independently published, pre Image *Astounding Space Thrills* issues. I regretted the delay but Pat didn't seem to mind. (For the record, he'd been paid as soon as his work was completed.) We stayed in touch, our friendship was strong and our periodic—not to mention lengthy—discussions of everything under the sun brightened some difficult times for both of us. I talked to him about a week before he passed away. He had seemed to be rallying and was in fairly good spirits and the news of his death found me unprepared. It seemed so unfair. How could so robust and complete a man be gone?

A month or so later, Steve Conley and Image decided to publish a "Galaxy Sized" edition of *Astounding Space Thrills.* This meant there would be plenty of room for "Jet Victor" *and* a "Crater Kid" story bracketing Pat's work. With a bit of experimentation, I found a way to tastefully color Pat's gray tones digitally. I think he would have liked the way it turned out. Mine was the last story he ever illustrated. I'm very proud to have collaborated with Pat. I'm prouder still just to have known him.

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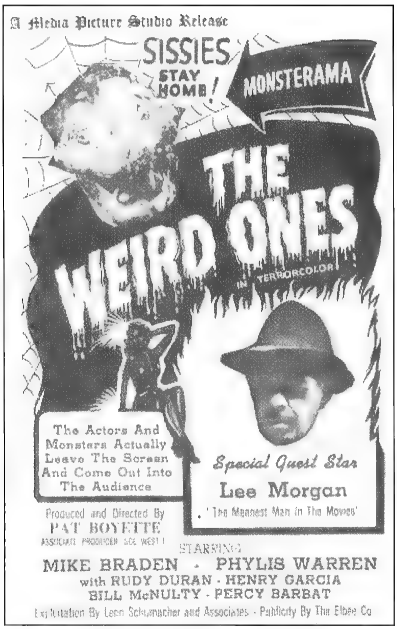
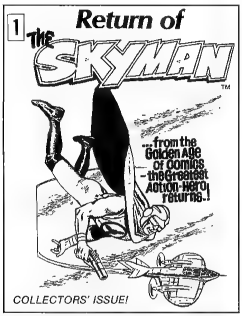
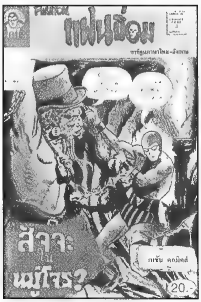
www.martybaumann.com


A Media Picture Studio Release
SISSIES STAY HOME!
MONSTERAMA
THE WEIRD ONES
IN TERRORCOLOR!
The Actors And Monsters Actually Leave The Screen And Come Out Into The Audience
Special Guest Star
Lee Morgan
'The Meanest Man in The Movies'
Produced and Directed By
PAT BOYETTE
STARRING
MIKE BRADEN - PHYLIS WARREN
with RUDY DURAN - HENRY GARCIA
BILL McNULTY - PERCY BARBAT
Exploitation By Leon Schumacher and Associates - Publicity By The Elbee Co



Unpublished alternate cover for ACE Comics' **Return of The Skyman** #1 Skyman TM & © 1986, 2002 Ron Frantz.



This one has us stumped: obviously a foreign edition of Charlton's **The Phantom** #56, June 1973, but in what language? The Phantom TM & © 2002 King Features Syndicate.

Splash page to an unpublished Peacemaker story for what would have been **The Peacemaker** #6, January 1968, if the book had not been canceled. Reproduced from a photocopy of the original art, courtesy of Don Mangus. Illustration © 2002 Estate of Pat Boyette. Peacemaker TM & © 2002 DC Comics.

THE ALARM WAS FLASHED AT CHRISTOPHER SMITH'S 'PEACE PALACE' WHEN THE EGYPTIAN INVADERS APPEARED ABOVE THE SECRET ATOMIC LABRATORIES THE COMMUNISTS HAD BUILT DEEP IN THE URAL MOUNTAINS! THE RUSSIAN SECURITY FORCE HELD THE WEIRD INVADERS OFF FOR A TIME....LONG ENOUGH FOR CHRISTOPHER SMITH TO ENTER THE FRAY AS.....
PEACEMAKER
QUICKLY! IT IS TIME! WITHDRAW TO THE RENDEVOUS POINT! DATSHELUT, RELEASE THE SACRED MISTS!
BLOCK THE EXITS! DON'T LET THEM ESCAPE!
IN NORTH AFRICA, UNKNOWN TO ANY RECOGNIZED GOVERNMENT, A 'REINCARNATED' PHAROAH ADDRESSES A SUPPLICATION TO AN ANCIENT GOD IN A TONGUE NOT HEARD IN 5,000 YEARS!
SUNMASTER, YOU HAVE GUIDED MY HANDS AND BROUGHT VICTORY TO MY ARMIES! EVEN NOW, THEY RETURN WITH THE PRIZE FOR WHICH I SENT THEM!
SCRIPT JOE GILL
EDITOR DICK GIORDANO
ART PAT BOYETTE
HE CLAIMS TO BE CHUFRU OF THE OLD KINGDOM (2580 B.C.) RETURNED TO RULE AFRICA AND THE WORLD! IF HE IS MAD, HIS IS THE MADNESS OF GENIUS..FOR BEFORE HE PROCLAIMED HIS KINGDOM, CHUFRU ABSORBED THE SCIENCES OF THE WORLD HE ENTERED, AND THUS BECAME..
THE GOLDEN PHAROAH
1

The Pat Boyette Index: *Addenda*

The following additions and corrections to the Pat Boyette index published in *Charlton Spotlight* #1 are to be used in conjunction with that index. Compiled by Michael Ambrose with help from and thanks to Don Mangus, Ramon Schenk, Robin Snyder, and members of the charlton-l listserv group. © 2002 Don Mangus

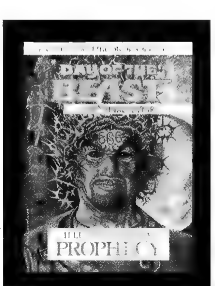
PUBLISHER	TITLE	ISSUE	DATE	FEATURE	PAGES
ACG	Beyond Space, The Sci-Fi Collection		2001	There Shall Be an Ending (rep Space Adventures #2, 7/68)	9
ACG	Beyond Space, The Sci-Fi Collection		2001	An Old Man (rep Ghost Manor #29, 6/76)	7
Atlas/Seaboard	Weird Suspense	1	Feb-75	Curse of the Tarantula	20
Atlas/Seaboard	Weird Suspense	2	Apr-75	The Revenge of the Spider Witch	20
Atlas/Seaboard	Weird Suspense	3	Jun-75	Mind/Matter = Murder	18
Brown Watson	Flash Gordon Annual		1977	British hardcover, part color, reps Charlton stories Mission into the Mystic Realm (#16); Time Waits for Ali Men (#18); The Intruder, The Creeping Menace (#17)	
Charlton	Attack	22	May-80	The 50th Mission	
Charlton	Attack	43	Nov-83	The Killer Camera	
Charlton	Battlefield Action	72	Dec-81	Classic Weapon. Fokker D VII	
Charlton	Billy the Kid	71	Mar-69	Bounty Hunter	7
Charlton	Billy the Kid	92	May-72	The Burning Question (Mr. Y)	7
Charlton	Billy the Kid	93	Jul-72	Mr. Young of the Boothill Gazette (Mr. Y)	7
Charlton	Billy the Kid	95	Oct 72	A Steak for Bible John (Mr. Y)	7
Charlton	Billy the Kid	106	Dec-73	A Texas Wedding (Mr Y)	6
Charlton	Billy the Kid	110	Dec-74	$1,000 Reward for Young (Mr. Y)	6
Charlton	Billy the Kid	146	Jan-82	A Texas Wedding (Mr. Y)	6
Charlton	Billy the Kid	148	Jan-82	The Burning Question	
Charlton	Billy the Kid	149	Aug-82	Mr. Young of the Boothill Gazette (Mr. Y)	
Charlton	Cheyenne Kid	67	Jul-68	The Last Massacre	18
Charlton	Cheyenne Kid	68	Sep-68	The Kaiser of North Dakota	
Charlton	Cheyenne Kid	69	Nov-68	Kiowa's Revenge	9 & cover
Charlton	Cheyenne Kid	69	Nov-68	The Fugitive	9
Charlton	Cheyenne Kid	71	Mar-69	The Ghost of Monument Valley	10 & cover
Charlton	Cheyenne Kid	71	Mar-69	Duel in Devil's Gorge	8
Charlton	Fightin' Army	111	Sep-73	Where Do They Come From?	
Charlton	Fightin' Army	125	Aug-76	Cover	
Charlton	Fightin' Army	159	Aug-82	Lost in No-Man's Land	
Charlton	Fightin' Army	161	Dec-82	The Killer	9 & painted cover
Charlton	Fightin' Marines	116	Jan-74	Not Tough Enough	7
Charlton	Fightin' Marines	120	Jan 75	Old Soldiers Never Die (spot illos)	
Charlton	Fightin' Marines	121	Mar-75	Cover	
Charlton	Fightin' Marines	131	Sep-76	MiG Alley	1
Charlton	Ghostly Haunts	22	Jan 72	Witch's Brew	8

cont. next page

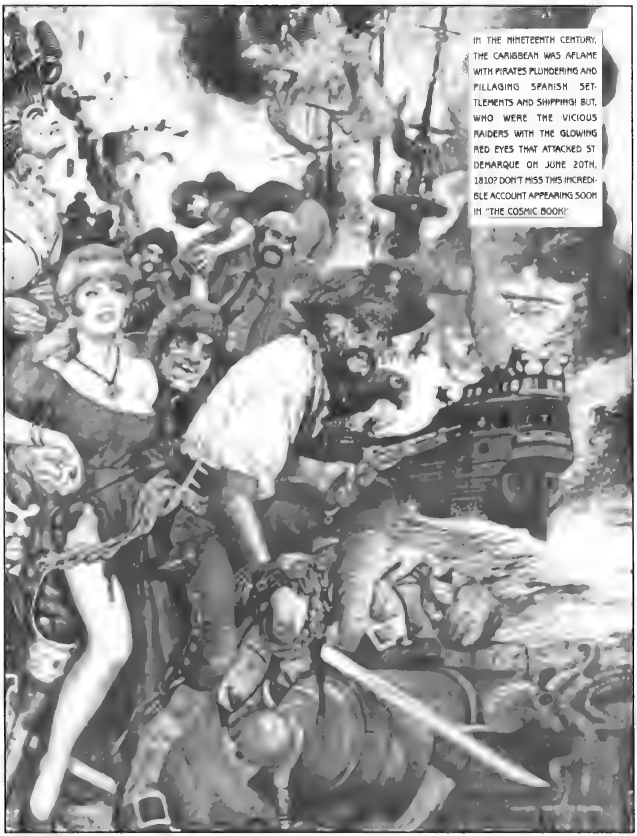
This painted advertising piece prepared by Pat Boyette, circa 1964, is for a TV series that was never produced, as far as we know—but it is the genesis of Pat's character The Spookman, whose one and only appearance was in **Charlton Premiere** #1, September 1967. Here we have "Aaron Spring . . . curator of the Piper Art Gallery"; Spookman was "Aaron Piper, owner of these art galleries that bear his name." Unlike The Sandman, however, Spookman traveled throughout time to acquire rare works of art, not capture crooks. The original, in a mix predominant y of reds and yellows, demonstrates that even before Pat started drawing comics for Charlton in 1965 his style and technique were maturing. The lettering is on an overlay, part of which is missing at the end of the word "Sandman." © 2002 Estate of Pat Boyette.

Charlton	Ghostly Haunts	24	Apr-72	The Other One	
Charlton	Ghostly Haunts	26	Aug-72	The Killer Camera	1
Charlton	Ghostly Haunts	33	Jul-73	Come, See Me Die!	8
Charlton	Ghostly Haunts	51	Aug-76	Witches' Sabbat	1
Charlton	Ghostly Haunts	52	Oct-76	Cover	
Charlton	Ghostly Tales	57	Jan-67	The Smoke Demon	
Charlton	Ghostly Tales	58	Nov-66	The Phantom Green Beret	8
Charlton	Ghostly Tales	65	Feb-68	Cat in the Well	7
Charlton	Ghostly Tales	73	May-69	The Flying Dutchman	
Charlton	Ghostly Tales	148	Apr-81	Gypsy's Revenge	
Charlton	Ghostly Tales	152	Dec-81	The Vandals	
Charlton	Ghost Manor (2d)	32	Dec-76	Guest of Honor	
Charlton	Ghost Manor (2d)	47	Nov 79	The Ultimate Test	
Charlton	Ghost Manor (2d)	75	Jul-84	Spacious Rooms for Rent	9
Charlton	Ghost Manor (2d)	76	Sep-84	The Shining Castle	
Charlton	Haunted	13	Jul-73	The Vampire Lives	
Charlton	Haunted	28	Jul-76	Man Hunt	1
Charlton	Haunted	40	Feb-79	The Disappearing Room	
Charlton	Haunted	52	Dec 80	The Survivor	
Charlton	Haunted	71	Jan-84	Moon Stalker	
Charlton	Hollywood Romances	54	Aug-70	Sheila's Secrets (as by Alexander Barnes)	10
Charlton	Just Married	72	Aug-70	Love, Honor and Never Obey (as by Barnes)	7
Charlton	Love Diary	65	Mar 70	You Can't Put a Cast on a Broken Heart (as by Barnes)	7
Charlton	Many Ghosts of Doctor Graves, The	2	Jul-67	The Space Ship	8
Charlton	Many Ghosts of Doctor Graves, The	3	Sep-67	Title Page	1
Charlton	Many Ghosts of Doctor Graves, The	3	Sep-67	The Perfect Crime	8
Charlton	Many Ghosts of Doctor Graves, The	58	Aug 76	Moon Stalker	
Charlton	Many Ghosts of Doctor Graves, The	63	Feb-78	Satan Lives	
Charlton	Many Ghosts of Doctor Graves, The	66	Jun-81	The Ghost of Marlin Manor	
Charlton	Many Ghosts of Doctor Graves, The	69	Nov-81	The Perfect Crime	
Charlton	Phantom	51	Aug-72	A Broken Vow	7 & cover
Charlton	Phantom	51	Aug-72	Captive King	7
Charlton	Phantom	51	Aug-72	The Enchanted Land (textured)	3
Charlton	Phantom	51	Aug-72	The Treasure Room	7
Charlton	Scary Tales	38	May-83	Satan Is Free	
Charlton	Secret Romance	10	Dec-70	Frozen Kisses (as by Bruce Lovelace)	6
Charlton	Six Million Dollar Man	7	Mar-78	Hostage (inks Himes)	11 & inks cover
Charlton	Six Million Dollar Man	8	May-78	Final Test (inks Himes)	23 & inks cover
Charlton	Six Million Dollar Man	9	Jun-78	Match Up (inks Himes)	23 & inks cover
Charlton	Thunderbolt	59	Sep-67	Assassins	
Charlton	War	4	Jan-76	Death Squad (text illos)	
Charlton	War	4	Jan-76	Torpedo Attack	1
Charlton	War	18	Dec-79	Torpedo Attack	1
Charlton	War	18	Dec-79	Death Squad (3 text illos)	
Charlton	War Heroes	23	Mar-67	No Glory Left	
HCCAN	HCCAN	v 6#9	May-74	Cover (Spookman) [Houston Comic Collector's Ass'n]	
Image	Galaxy-Sized Astounding Space Thrills	1	Oct-01	The Pilgrim's Wake (with Marty Baumann, "Crater Kid" framing story)	7
OBT Press	Hardpressed, TX (The Luckenbach Showdown)		1986	novel by Ed Syers, 8 full-page text illos by Boyette	
Robin Snyder	The Comics		Jan-92	Robin Snyder Asks: (PB discusses best work)	2
Stendec Comms.	Day of the Beast		1981	"A Fotographic by Boyette & Himes": portfolio of 13 color plates	
??	Coven: Sisterhood of the Dark	v.1	??	??	??

HCCAN vol. 6, #9, May 1974, fanzine published by the Houston Comic Collector's Association ©1974, 2002 Estate of Pat Boyette.



Day of the Beast. For a time Pat Boyette and Fred Himes were publishing partners in San Antonio. This "fotographic" by Boyette and Himes consists of color plates of 13 Boyette paintings with accompanying "prophecy" text. © 1981 Stendec Communications, © 2002 Estate of Pat Boyette.


IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, THE CARIBBEAN WAS AFLAME WITH PIRATES PLUNDERING AND PILLAGING SPANISH SETTLEMENTS AND SHIPPING! BUT, WHO WERE THE VICIOUS RAIDERS WITH THE GLOWING RED EYES THAT ATTACKED ST DEMARQUE ON JUNE 20TH, 1810? DON'T MISS THIS INCREDIBLE ACCOUNT APPEARING SOON IN "THE COSMIC BOOK!"

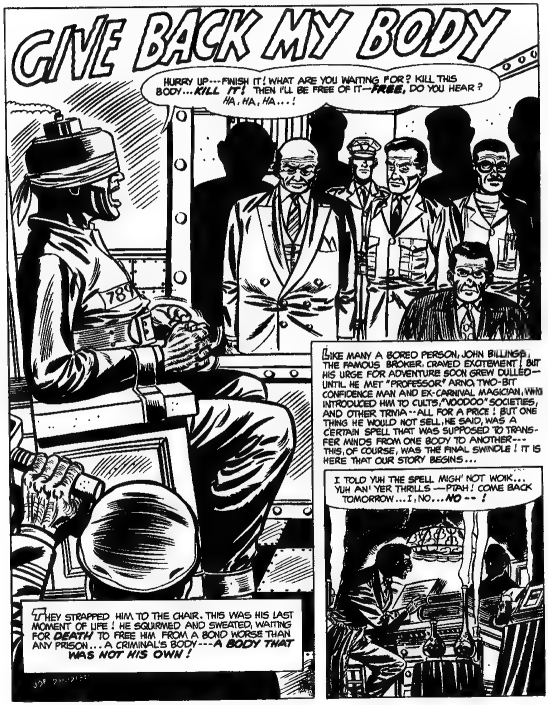
Pat's gorgeous gatefold painting of mysterious marauding pirates that appeared in **The Cosmic Book** #1, December 1986, from ACE Comics. It's a real shame we can't print this in color. © 1986, 2002 Estate of Pat Boyette.

STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES

The following outstanding magazines are easily identified on their covers by the words A CHARLTON PUBLICATION.

ATOMIC MOUSE • COWBOY WESTERN HEROES • CRIME AND JUSTICE • FUNNY ANIMALS
GHOST STORIES • HAUNTED • HOT RODS AND RACING CARS • 2001 FUNNIES
LASH LARUE WESTERN • ROCKY LANE WESTERN • RACKET SQUAD • SIX-GUN HEROES
ROMANTIC STORY • SCIENCE-FICTION SPACE ADVENTURES • STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES
SWEETHEARTS • TEX RITTER WESTERN • TRUE LIFE SECRETS • TV TEENS • THE THING

Every effort is made to insure that these comic magazines contain the highest quality of wholesome entertainment.


GIVE BACK MY BODY
HURRY UP---FINISH IT! WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? KILL THIS BODY...KILL IT! THEN I'LL BE FREE OF IT—FREE, DO YOU HEAR? HA, HA, HA...!
LIKE MANY A BORED PERSON, JOHN BILLINGS, THE FAMOUS BROKER, CRAVED EXCITEMENT! BUT HIS URGE FOR ADVENTURE SOON GREW DULLED—UNTIL HE MET "PROFESSOR" ARNO, TWO-BIT CONFIDENCE MAN AND EX-CARNIVAL MAGICIAN, WHO INTRODUCED HIM TO CULTS, VOODOO, SOCIETIES, AND OTHER TRIVIA--ALL FOR A PRICE! BUT ONE THING HE WOULD NOT SELL, HE SAID, WAS A CERTAIN SPELL THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO TRANSFER MINDS FROM ONE BODY TO ANOTHER---THIS, OF COURSE, WAS THE FINAL SWINDLE! IT IS HERE THAT OUR STORY BEGINS...
THEY STRAPPED HIM TO THE CHAIR. THIS WAS HIS LAST MOMENT OF LIFE! HE SQUIRMED AND SWEATED, WAITING FOR DEATH TO FREE HIM FROM A BOND WORSE THAN ANY PRISON...A CRIMINAL'S BODY---A BODY THAT WAS NOT HIS OWN!
I TOLD YUH THE SPELL MIGHT NOT WORK... YUH AIN'T YER THRILLS—FINISH! COME BACK TOMORROW...I, NO...NO--!

Charlton Classic Reprint

Originally published in **Strange Suspense Stories** #19, July 1954. Art by Joe Shuster. © 1954 Charlton Comics Group.

STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES

HA, HA, HA!
ARRRGGHH!
OH, BUT IT DID WORK, PROFESSOR! HA, HA! I'M FREE AGAIN--AND THEY'LL BE HEARING FROM ME, THOSE OUT THERE! NOTHING CAN STOP ME NOW THAT I'VE GOT THE PERFECT DISGUISE!
HA, HA...
HE WAS RIGHT! FOR SOON AFTERWARDS, A SERIES OF VICIOUS ROBBERIES AND MURDERS ROCKED THE CITY...
AND, AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS, LT. STEVE ANDERSON AND SGT. JOE BRODY WERE TRYING TO PIECE OUT THE CLUES...
HERALD EXPRESS
BODY OF CARNIVAL MAGICIAN FOUND IN RIVER
$150,000 ROBBERY AT BROKERAGE FIRM
HEAD JURYMAN IN LEFTY RICCARDI CASE KILLED MYSTERIOUSLY
I'VE CHECKED THESE REPORTS FOR HOURS, STEVIE, AND I CAN'T FIND A SINGLE THING WE CAN GO ON!
THERE SEEMS TO BE A PATTERN TO ALL THESE CRIMES, JOE... I KNOW THIS SOUNDS CRAZY, BUT ---IT LOOKS LIKE LEFTY RICCARDI'S WORK!
YOU'VE BEEN READING TOO MANY DIME NOVELS, STEVE! YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO THAT RICCARDI GETS THE CHAIR IN 10 DAYS! HIS GANG IS OUT OF IT ALSO. THEY ALL HAVE SOLID ALIBIS.
YEAH, GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT! JUST THE SAME ...WE'RE GOING DOWN-TOWN TO INVESTIGATE THAT NEW ROBBERY OVER AT THE BROKER-AGE HOUSE...GOT A HUNCH...
20 MINUTES LATER. THE TWO DETECTIVES STEPPED INSIDE THE HANDSOMELY-DECORATED OFFICE OF JOHN BILLINGS...
I'M POLICE LT. ANDERSON OF THE 200 PCT., MR. BILLINGS. THIS IS SGT. BRODY. WE'D LIKE TO GO OVER THE ROBBERY WITH YOU!
AS I TOLD THE POLICE, GENTLEMEN, I WAS NOT --AH--PRESENT WHEN THE HORRIBLE INCIDENT OCCURRED!
2

STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES

WHERE WERE YOU?
I---(PUFF, PUFF)--OVERSLEPT THAT MORNING, SO I ARRIVED AT THE OFFICE ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES AFTER IT HAD OPENED FOR THE DAY!
THAT'S RIGHT, SIR. I SAW MR. BILLINGS WALK IN AROUND THEN. WE ALL DID!
IN OTHER WORDS, YOU DON'T KNOW WHO COMMITTED THE ROBBERY, DO YOU, MR. BILLINGS?
OF COURSE NOT! SURELY YOU DON'T THINK I ---WHY THAT'S PREPOSTEROUS!
RELAX, BILLINGS, WE'RE JUST TRYING TO GET THE FACTS!
A FEW MOMENTS LATER, THE DETECTIVES WALKED OUT, TWO VERY PUZZLED MEN...
JOE---THAT CHARACTER'S ALIBI IS TOO SMOOTH! HE TALKS AND ACTS LIKE... LIKE RICCARDI! NO... IT'S FANTASTIC! SHEER COINCIDENCE!
I DUNNO, STEVE. I GOT THAT SAME IMPRESSION! HOW ABOUT THE WAY HE BROKE THAT MATCH? THAT WAS LEFTY RICCARDI TO A "T"!
HE WAS LEFT-HANDED, TOO, WASN'T HE? HM... OKAY, JOE.. WE'RE GOING TO CHECK UP ON THIS GUY FROM A TO Z!
I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING! IT'S GOING TO BE A TOUGH JOB!
TWO DAYS PASSED... THE TWO MEN WORKED THEMSELVES TO DEATH TRYING TO SOLVE THE ENIGMA OF THE MYSTERIOUS MR. BILLINGS! FINALLY...
AW--IT'S NO USE, STEVE! THE GUY IS CLEAN! THE ONLY BAD THING HE EVER DID WAS TO PAL AROUND WITH A TROUSTER CALLED "PROFESSOR" ARNO, THE LAST COUPLE OF MONTHS!
THAT'S IT!
BOTH THE PROFESSOR AND THE JURYMAN ON THE RICCARDI CASE WERE KILLED THE SAME WEEK! AND BILLINGS WAS THE MANNERISMS OF LEFTY RICCARDI--THERE'S A CONNECTION, SOMEHOW!
GREAT SCOTT! YOU'RE RIGHT!
BUT SEVERAL DAYS OF SHADOWING JOHN BILLINGS PROVED FRUITLESS--UNTIL, ONE NIGHT...
BUT I DON'T GET IT! FOR A GUY THAT'S JUST BEEN ROBBED, BILLINGS SEEMS TO BE AWFULLY HAPPY! HE JUST WENT INSIDE LOADED WITH DOUGH!
SHHH---QUIET! THAT CAR IS STOPPING AT HIS HOUSE...!
3

STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES

WOW! DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?
YEAH--LEFTY RICCARDI'S GANG--INCLUDING HIS GIRLFRIEND!
LISTEN CAREFULLY, JOE! I'M GOING TO FIND OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING THERE--SEND A CALL TO HEADQUARTERS! IF I'M NOT BACK HERE IN FIFTEEN MINUTES--BREAK IN!
CHECK!
LT. STEVE ANDERSON RAN SWIFTLY UP TO THE HOUSE AND HID HIMSELF WITHIN HEARING DISTANCE OF THE TERRACED LIBRARY. IT WAS APPARENT THAT SOMETHING BIG WAS GOING TO OCCUR ...
CHEE--WOT A BIG JOINT!
OKAY---GAVE WITH THE ANSWERS, BIG-BOY! WHAT IS ALL THIS ABOUT AN' HOW DIDJA KNOW WHERE TO FIND US?
MAYBE THIS MONEY WILL ANSWER FOR ME, KATE! HA,HA... WE HAVE ENOUGH TO GET STARTED AGAIN!
MY NAME --- YOU KNOW IT!
WHEW! LOOK AT DAT!--CHEE!
IT'S FROM "MY" OWN FIRM! HA,HA... THOSE POOR DUMB GUARDS! YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN THEM! THEY LOOKED SO SURPRISED WHEN I PULLED THE TRIGGER! THEN I WENT OUT THE REAR, PUT THE MONEY IN A SAFE PLACE, DOUBLED BACK, AND CAME IN 15 MINUTES AFTER OPENING TIME!
W-WHO ARE YOU? YOU TALK LIKE---
--LIKE LEFTY RICCARDI, EH? WELL, THAT'S WHO I AM! HA, HA, HA... DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE ME, BOYS? HA, HA, HA...
Y-YEAH, BOSS. WOT A PLASTIC JOB! HOW'D YUH GET OUT O' STIR?
THROUGH A SPELL, IKE! HA, HA! I PASSED OUT ONE NIGHT IN MY CELL WITH A LOUSY HEADACHE --- WHEN I CAME TO, IT WAS IN ANOTHER ROOM! THIS PROFESSOR CALLED ME "BILLINGS"! THEN, IT DAWNED ON ME THAT I, LEFTY RICCARDI, WAS FREE! BUT MY FRIEND KNEW TOO MUCH, SO...HA, HA, HA...

STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES

NOW I'VE HEARD IT ALL!
BUT IT'S GOTTA BE LEFTY! HE KNOWS OUR NAMES ...HE-HE KNOWS -- EVERYTHING!
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE -- I GET THE CREEPS LOOKING AT HIM! HE'S KAPUT-- CRAZY!
CRAZY AM I? I'LL GET RID OF YOU, HEINRICH, JUST LIKE I DID THE PROFESSOR AND THAT COURT STOOGE ... NEVER TOOK TO YOU ANYWAY!
YA-A-A-A-H!
BANG!
BANG!
NOW GET THIS -- ALL OF YOU! WHAT I SAY GOES! STARTING TOMORROW, WE'RE GOING TO PULL BANK JOBS! WE GOT EVERYTHING HERE TO MAKE IT A SUCCESS, SO THE NEXT GUY THAT CALLS ME CRAZY, GETS IT RIGHT BETWEEN THE EYES!
S-SURE, BOSS! WE-WE WERE ONLY KIDDING!
MEANWHILE, LT. STEVE ANDERSON, HEARING SHOTS, RAN INSIDE THE HOUSE, AND...
OKAY, BILLINGS ... I'VE HEARD ENOUGH! YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!
IT'S A COPPER!
YOU DIRTY RAT--YOU WERE SPYING ON ME, EH! WELL--TAKE THAT..!
OWW--I'M HIT...MY SHOULDER--!
--URRGGHH!!
BANG
BANG
SECONDS LATER, THE POLICE, LED BY SGT. JOE BRODY, RUSHED INSIDE THE HOUSE, AND...
BILLINGS IS DEAD!
I'VE GOT A HUNCH THAT THIS CASE ISN'T OVER! LET'S GET OVER TO STATE PRISON RIGHT AWAY--WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME!
AS THE CAR ROARED THROUGH THE NIGHT TOWARD STATE PRISON, A FURIOUS RAINSTORM BROKE OUT, SHATTERING THE STILLNESS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE...
5

STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES

IT WAS SOME TWO HOURS LATER WHEN THE TWO DETECTIVES PULLED UP ALONGSIDE A SOLEMN PROCESSION WITHIN THE CONFINES OF AN EVEN MORE SOMBER PRISON...

WE'RE TOO LATE!

STEVE--IF IT'S WHAT I THINK IT IS, DON'T MAKE A FOOL OF YOURSELF BEFORE THE GOVERNOR! DR. HALL CALLED HEADQUARTERS WHEN YOU WERE OUT OF THE CAR...BILLINGS WAS BEING TREATED FOR SCHIZOPHRENIA-SPLIT-PERSONALITY!---SO HE COULD HAVE BEEN INSANE!

AH, LT. ANDERSON! IT'S A PLEASURE TO SEE THE MAN WHO PUT THAT MURDERER IN PRISON! YOU'RE JUST IN TIME, TOO!--IT'S THE END OF THE ROAD FOR LEFTY RICCARDI!

THEY SAY ALL THOSE TOUGH CRIMINALS BREAK DOWN ON THE CHAIR...WELL--HE WAS NO EXCEPTION!

IT'S AMAZING HOW HIS PERSONALITY CHANGED! HE MADE THIS LAST ENTRY IN HIS DIARY JUST BEFORE WE CAME FOR HIM...FRANKLY, IT'S NOTHING OF IMPORTANCE...JUST THE RAVINGS OF A MADMAN!

MAY WE SEE IT?

UNKNOWN

I thought that today that Professor Cobo is dead! I suspected a week ago that Lefty Riccardi must have killed him and set his body. Now I must have killed him and set his body. Now I must pay with my own life for a crime of which I am innocent. It was exciting at first, but as he committed those other crimes before, I thought it was exciting at first, but as he committed those other crimes before, I thought it was exciting by proxy. I was glad that he was getting away with them. Now I am glad that I am condemned--proxy. I was glad that he was getting away with them. Now I am glad that I am condemned--because it will be Lefty Riccardi's death, not mine! I don't care about myself...I because it will be Lefty Riccardi's death, not mine! I don't care about myself...I don't care about myself...I can't get back---this body is evil! Why don't they execute me? I will they would! Yes, only they will!

He lives again!
Mr. Jigsaw TM & © 2002
Ron Fortier & Gary Kato.

Origin of a Superhero

Mr. Jigsaw *and* Charlton Comics

by **Ron Fortier**

CHARLTON COMICS.

Two words that instantly flood me with long-ago memories of my youth and my eventual entry into the world of professional writing. Realizing that this account is intended to recall Charlton's comic books and creative personnel in the grand scheme of comics history, I have to take a small side trip to my days as a fan.

When I was growing up and reading (make that devouring) every single comic title I could get my hands on, there was only one real big outfit, and that was DC. This was the late fifties and early sixties, and when I was ten years old, the only superhero titles worthy of that august description were *Superman*, *Batman*, and *Wonder Woman*. The Flash, Green Lantern, and the new JLA had yet to make their appearances at the dawn of what would come to be labeled the Silver Age.

Oh, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby were around, but they were doing these truly weird monster books and to this day I still have trouble remembering what Marvel was called before it became Marvel. There were of course scores of other companies out there, each with its own specialty niche. Dell comics was the TV outfit in that it produced great comics based on popular TV series, from *Maverick* to *77 Sunset Strip*. If it was on the boob tube, it would ultimately find itself done up as a Dell comic.

Then there were the small outfits existing on the fringes. One of these being Charlton Comics, and much like the bigger companies they produced a ton of cowboy, war, horror, and romance titles. The difference with Charlton was that they were actually a small part of a larger publishing house. Early stories indicated that Charlton Publishing, known primarily for its song lyric magazines like *Hit Parader*, had started doing comics only as a means of keeping its printing presses going full-time, allowing them to operate more efficiently.

Now along about 1960 everything in the comics world went crazy. Kirby and Lee had made the bold move to bring back superheroes and give DC some serious competition. In quick succession they released The Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, Iron Man, Thor, and the Hulk. The Avengers would soon follow. Meanwhile DC had started revamping its old Golden Age heroes and almost overnight fans were given a new Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman, and Atom. Could a team book be far behind? Heck no. The summer of 1960 saw the birth of The Justice League of America. I have fond memories of riding all over town for nearly three weeks to make sure I did not miss that debut issue. I still get a lump in my throat to this day whenever I see the cover of that issue and the colorful DC heroes battling the giant alien starfish.

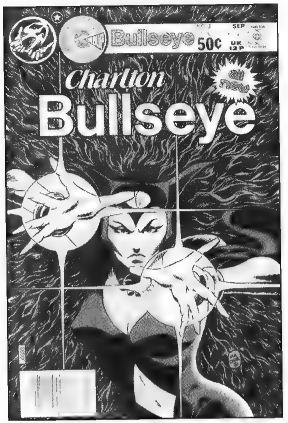
I doubt there could have been a better time to be a comics fan. And as every fan out there already knows, there is no curbing the addiction. The only soothing balm is more and more of what you crave. So while DC and the brand-new Marvel were dishing out dozens of great comics every week, the small guys decided to get in the game as well.

Charlton unleashed a barrage of its own hero titles. Several were drawn by the fantastic Steve Ditko, the same Ditko of Spider-Man fame. Out came the new Blue Beetle, The Fightin' Five, Captain Atom, The Question, and The Peacemaker, and later, Joe Staton and Nick Cuti's hilarious E-Man. God, what a great collection of titles. There was something raw and unvarnished about the Charlton books. They lacked the slick, top-of-the-line paper and coloring of DC and Marvel, but somehow that only added charm to the books themselves. The stories were always quick-paced, dramatic, and just plain fun.

Oddly enough, when the Charlton heroes years later resurfaced at DC, thanks in great part to then head honcho Dick Giordano, a one-time Charlton editor, they seemed out of place. Somehow the new, slicker packaging didn't fit comfortably on these characters and the books failed to do well. Truth is the DC editors given the titles didn't know what to do with them. Most of them

BLOODY CIVIL WAR HAS ERUPTED IN THE TAURIAN STAR SYSTEM. CONFLICTING ROYAL FAMILIES BATTLE FOR CONTROL OF THE TAURIAN THRONE.
WARLORD SALARAN, SENSING DEFEAT, HAS MADE PLANS FOR THE EARTH OF HIS HEIR IN A DESERTED SECTOR OF THE TAURIAN WAR SYSTEM. A TAURIAN BATTLE CRUISER CARRYING PRINCE MAK-LON & PRINCESS SAN-LI SECRETLY RENDEZVOUS WITH AN IMPERIAL NAVY SCOUT.
IT IS A QUIET PRELUDE TO WHAT WILL BECOME WET ANOTHER...
DUEL in the STARS
©1981 RON FORTIER & GARY KATO
THE TAURIAN PARTY EMERGES FROM THE AIR LOCK...
HELL-O-O, ABOARD THE ALLEGER! PRINCE MAK-LON AND PRINCESS SAN-LI I AM CAPTAIN TEEG ON BEHALF OF THE EMPEROR I OFFER YOU SANCTUARY
HOW ARE WE? I'M CAPTAIN MIGHTY AND I ACT AS THE EMPEROR'S ENVOY!

Splash page to "Duel in the Stars," Ron and Gary's breakthrough story in **Charlton Bullseye #3**, September 1981. © 1981, 2002 Ron Fortier & Gary Kato.



Dynamic cover of **Charlton Bullseye** #3, September 1981, by Ian Carr. © 1981, 2002 Ian Carr.

were green-behind-the-ears kids with no memory of the original Charlton runs, and they tried to turn these quirky figures into typical DC heroes—and they failed. Miserably.

But hey, that's my two cents' worth on things past.

Where do I fit in, you ask?

Well, many years after all the above, when Marvel was a BIG, BIG outfit and giving DC a serious financial run for its money, Charlton had long since abandoned most of its hero titles and was once again doing its run-of-the-mill horror books, almost all reprint. Charlton appeared to be on its last leg and most industry insiders didn't give them much chance of surviving through the seventies.

By this time I had aged myself right into adulthood, gone to Vietnam, come home, married, and started raising a family. I was working in a local factory and still harboring the fantastic dream of someday writing comics myself. Upon my return to civilian life, after the army, I had lucked upon comics fandom in its new and organized persona. Fans all over the country were writing, editing, and publishing their own little mags devoted to the world of comics. They were called fanzines and quickly became the training ground for lots of young would-be writers and artists. Folks like John Byrne and Roy Thomas got their start in the fanzines. I loved them and likewise began writing for them, basically comics-related articles. Some zines were audacious enough to focus on fiction, and it was in one of these that I first teamed up with artist Gary Kato. I had seen some of Gary's spot illustrations in Marty Greim's excellent zine, *Comic Crusader*, and loved them. Gary has a Ditko style to his work that is uncanny. I was in the process of writing a short science fiction action piece for a fiction zine and thought my chances of getting it accepted would be greatly enhanced if it were accompanied by artwork. To that end I managed to contact Gary via Greim, and made my pitch.

Gary immediately accepted and whipped off half a dozen fantastic illos (still in my collection to this day), and sure enough Gordon Linzner, the editor of *Space & Time*, took both the story and art. We were on our way. During the next couple of months I believe Gary and I had a second project done at *S&T*. Of course seeing all Gary's cool spot pieces, I started wondering what it would be like to work on a comics project with him. I came up with a short, seven-page space opera called "Duel in the Stars" and sent it off to him. Gary liked the idea and started drawing. I had yet to decide which fanzine we would submit the pages to once the strip was done.

Which is where the fates and Charlton comics entered our lives.

Oh, and Don Thompson and *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom* (now *The Comics Buyer's Guide*) as well.

You see, I was a subscriber to *TBG* and considered it the industry bible. If anything important was happening in the world of comics, you could learn about it in *TBG*. Thus it was while examining a copy of that weekly that I read an article detailing a new try-out book to be launched by Charlton Comics. It would be called *Charlton Bullseye*, and the editor, George Wildman, was looking for new talent to showcase. The twist was the company did not have the funds to pay the newcomers but would

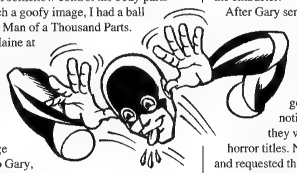
Splash page introducing Mr. Jigsaw, from **Scary Tales** #38, May 1983. Mr. Jigsaw TM & © 1983, 2002 Ron Fortier & Gary Kato.

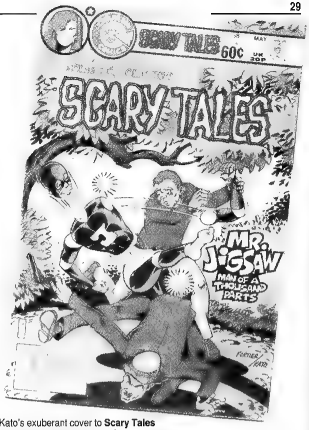
reward them with fifty copies of the issue their respective work appeared in. I was impressed, not only by the opportunity this could afford dreamers like me, but by the fact of its timing. Here Gary and I were in the middle of our first-ever comics project and suddenly a professional outfit was opening the door to new talent, and opening it wide. Hastily I contacted Gary and strongly suggested that instead of sending "Duel in the Stars" off to some amateur zine we redirect it to Charlton Comics and their try-out series. Gary eagerly approved and in no time flat wrote back to say he had finished the seven pages and mailed them off to the company in Derby, Connecticut.

I don't remember how long it was until we received an answer, but I do recall sitting on pins and needles and saying prayer after prayer for what seemed an eternity. Then came Gary's letter and the fantastic news that Charlton had contacted him and was going to be using "Duel in the Stars." It was scheduled to run in the third issue of the title. Bill Pearson, the assistant editor and gracious fellow who dealt with Gary, also mentioned in his reply that Gary's seven pages were the only submission to come in completely (and professionally, I might add) camera ready. They did not have to do anything to them but simply print them. Which says tons for the kind of pro Gary always was from day one.

So that was the story behind "Duel in the Stars." Happily our association did not end there. Prior to the story's appearance, Pearson contacted Gary once more and asked if the two of us might have another story for a subsequent issue. Wow, but were we flattered. They wanted more from us! On hearing this news, I turned the tables on Gary and asked if he had any ideas about a second entry, seeing that "Duel" had been my offering that first time at bat. To my pleasant surprise, Gary suggested we do a comedy superhero revolving around a character who could dismember himself and then somehow control his body parts to do his bidding. It was such a goofy image, I had a ball evolving it into Mr. Jigsaw, Man of a Thousand Parts.

As I was living in rural Maine at the time, I thought it would be fun to do a backwoods, naïve-type hero who basically bumbles his way through life and makes the best of his weird abilities. I hammered out a twelve-page origin yarn and sent it off to Gary,





Gary Kato's exuberant cover to **Scary Tales** #38, May 1983. Mr. Jigsaw TM & © 1983, 2002 Ron Fortier & Gary Kato.

and he did pure magic on it. The resulting pages were both sweet and hilarious, capturing all the warmth and zaniness inherent in the character.

After Gary sent the pages off to Charlton, the axe fell. For lack of support or whatever, the *Bullseye* project was canceled and lots of crushed creators out there sadly had their works returned unpublished. I assumed that would be our fate as well. Little did I realize just how well our character had gone over at the editorial offices. Gary was notified that although the *Bullseye* title was kaput, they wanted to keep our story and use it in one of their horror titles. Not only that, but they wanted to cover-feature it and requested that Gary draw up a cover illustration! It was just too incredible.

Thus some six months later *Scary Tales* #38 came out with a Mr. Jigsaw cover and story. You couldn't have found two happier comics creators, and although it would be the last association we would have with Charlton Comics, it was just the start for both our careers. Tony Isabella saw the issue, read the story, and began pushing it to all his friends in the business. To include Don Thompson, who eventually listed the story in *CBG* (as it was by then known) as one of the top twenty comic strips of the year. Not bad for a couple of rookies. As I said, it was just the beginning of many more projects and books, both as a team and individually, as our careers matured.

Still, here we are some twenty years later, and I'm writing about Charlton Comics. Excuse me if my eyes mist up just a little, okay. Those were fun days and damn but don't I miss that great little comics company.

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The Mr. Jigsaw Checklist

Scary Tales #38, May 1983 (Charlton)
"Mr. Jigsaw: Man of a Thousand Parts" (11 p origin story & cover)

Mr. Jigsaw: Man of a Thousand Parts 1988 (Ocean Comics)
"Mr Jigsaw: Man of a Thousand Parts" (11 p) (rep fr **Scary Tales** #38)
"The Job" (7 p)
"Lt. Boltz, Portland P.D." (11 p)
Cover

The Greatest American Comic Book #1, 1992 (Ocean Comics)
"The Apartment" (6 p)

E-Man #1, 1993 (Alpha Productions)
"A Day in the Park" (6 p)
Pin-up. E-Man juggling Jiggy (Joe Staton pencils, Gary Kato inks)

E-Man Returns #1, 1994 (Alpha Productions)
"Up on the Rooftops" (6 p)

"Secret Identity" (6 p) (unpublished, intended for a canceled issue of **E-Man** from Alpha Productions)

The Division Street Ramble . . .

TOM SUTTON

. . . from page 1

When I was looking for cover art for *Charlton Spotlight* #1 that would capture what that issue was about—remembering Pat Boyette—and be drawn by someone who actually *knew* Pat, Tom swiftly and enthusiastically came through with the fine tribute illustration that graced that issue's cover.

From that point on, Tom and I talked on the phone for hours on several occasions, about Pat and Charlton comics and Tom's other work and just about everything else; anyone who knew Tom at all knew what a salty, hilarious, wide-ranging, and roundabout conversationalist he was. I last spoke to him about three months ago; on the day he died I was clearing out old voice-mail messages from the office phone, and there were two from Tom. I decided to keep those, for some reason. I little knew that would be the last time I'd hear his voice.

I want to prepare a special tribute to Tom Sutton and his Charlton work for next issue, and I'm putting out the call now for memoirs, reminiscences, anecdotes, artwork, and so on from those who knew or worked with Tom. We'll also have extensive bibliographic features, including checklists and a cover gallery. Let's pay homage to another fine Charlton artist gone from our midst, and give Tom the kind of send-off he would have liked.

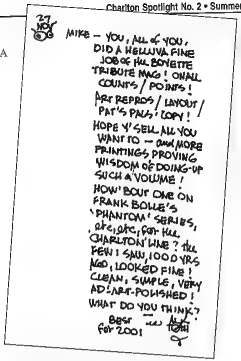
IF YOU'VE ever wondered what came out of Charlton besides a few classic action-hero characters like Captain Atom and The Blue Beetle, or are curious about the scores of often uncredited artists who toiled in the halls of Charlton, or just plain would like to know what's missing to complete that run of *Fightin' Navy*, this magazine is for you.

There's been a veritable explosion of interest in Charlton in the last two years. Charlton's former editors and creators, many of whom are still with us and still drawing and writing, have come into the spotlight (as it were) to tell their Charlton stories in interviews and convention panels. But there are lots of byways of Charlton history yet to be trod. Our purpose is to walk down as many of those less-traveled sidewalks around the Charlton building as we can, talking along the way with the men and women who were there and did the work, as far as we are able. Our premiere issue, spotlighting the life and work of the late, great Pat Boyette, garnered much praise and a lot of feedback, and convinced me that there was indeed an audience for this kind of specialty publication.

We're close to a year late with this issue, for which I apologize. Part of the problem with the kind of narrow focus that *Charlton Spotlight* has is that it's not easy to find the information I'd like to publish. Compared to the worlds of, say, Marvel and DC Comics, which are extensively explored in the comics press, not much Charlton history has seen print or is known to the average old-time comics fan. Charlton comics themselves, especially books from the 1940s and '50s, are not commonly available or are hideously expensive. We're here to try to remedy the lack of Charlton history, but we can't do it without your help. *Spotlight* has an ongoing need for artwork, interviews, checklists, memoirs, analytical articles, reviews, and the like. If you've got original or unpublished art, obscure fanzine articles, interviews with Charlton creators, or a unique tale to tell about your own Charlton experience, we'd sure appreciate seeing and hearing them for our pages.

LETTERS: We received a lot of mail after *Charlton Spotlight* #1 hit the streets, so let's get right to it! . . .

Alex Toth
Hollywood, CA


MIKE -- YOU, ALL OF YOU, DID A HELLUVA FINE JOB OF ALL BOYETTE TRIBUTE MAG! SMALL COUNTS / POINTS! ART REPROS / LAYOUT / PAT'S PAGE / COPY!
HOPE Y' SELL ALL YOU WANT TO -- AND MORE PRINTINGS PROVING WISDOM OF DOING-UP SUCH A VOLUME!
HOW 'BOUT ONE ON FRANK BOLLE AND HIS 'PHANTOM' SERIES, ETC. ETC. FOR ALL CHARLTON LINE? THE FEW I SAW, 1000 YRS AGO, LOOKED FINE! CLEAN, SIMPLE, VERY AD!ART-POLISHED! WHAT DO YOU THINK?
BEST -- ALEX TOTH
FOR 2001

Our tribute to Pat in Spotlight *#1 would have been far the poorer without Alex Toth's contribution. Thanks for your encouraging words, Alex! (And we'll get to Frank Bolle . . .)*

Mark Evanier
via e-mail

Thanks for the lovely first issue of what is already one of my favorite magazines. Jeez, how could I not love a whole issue devoted to one of my favorite artists and human beings? Pat Boyette was a lovely man who did amazing things on paper. It saddens me that the supply of them has ended, and that I'll never hear that wonderful baritone of his on the telly.

I worked with Pat a couple of times, one of which produced a rather large body of his work that is unmentioned in your magazine. That was a series of stories I edited for Hanna-Barbera of characters like Jabberjaw, Young Samson, Scooby Doo and Clue Club, among others. Pat, usually working in tandem with Fred Himes, drew about fifty stories over two years All but one appeared only in foreign comics, the one exception being a Clue Club story that ran in a book called *Hanna-Barbera TV Stars* that was briefly published by Marvel. (I don't see this anywhere in the checklist you ran, nor any of the stories published overseas.)

I took a risk hiring Pat for these jobs, as the Hanna-Barbera hierarchy had given me only one directive when I was hired. It was to never employ anyone who'd worked for Charlton. Both H-B and the publishers overseas who reprinted the American H-B comics had loathed about 80% of what Charlton had produced when they'd held the license to those characters. However, it was too much of a joy to work with Pat and, except on Scooby—he never quite got the hang of those characters—he never disappointed, and no one was unhappy with his work for me.

Before that, I had worked with Pat on some comics that I edited/wrote for the Edgar Rice Burroughs estate, again for foreign publication. Dan Spiegle was the lead artist on the Korak stories but, when we needed an extra hand, Alex Toth suggested I give Pat a call. I was very glad he did, as I not only got three or four fine Korak stories out of him, I made a wonderful friend.

Thanks for giving me the chance to spend some more time with Pat.

Don Mangus's extensive Pat Boyette index in Spotlight *#1, exhaustive as it was, lacked a single instance of Pat's work on the overseas Hanna-Barbera and Burroughs books. We'd like to include this data in a future complete update of the checklist—can anyone out there help supply it?*

Roy Thomas
St. Matthews, SC

Thanks so very much for sending me the first issue of *Charlton Spotlight*. It's a wonderful magazine, and I assume you also sent a copy to Jon B. Cooke, who's spending a couple of issues of *Comic Book Artist* on Charlton and its personnel. I wish you the best of luck with the magazine, and I look forward to future issues. I admire the sheer work that went into your Pat Boyette index

I was an admirer of Pat Boyette's work myself, and recall enjoying some art and articles about him in CFA-APA a few months back, possibly by Don Mangus, which I was thinking of asking about recycling. But you've done far more than *Alter Ego* ever could in this area.

And thank you, Roy, for the continued excellence of your magazine **Alter Ego**, *the granddaddy of all comics fanzines and a model for all of us who toil in the fields of comics history. AE can be found at all finer comics shops, or order from TwoMorrows, 1812 Park Dr., Raleigh, NC 27605, www.twomorrows.com, $8 per copy ($10 Canada, $11 elsewhere); contact Roy at* ***roydann@ntinet.com***

Grass Green
Ft. Wayne, IN

Let me thank you (and not QUIETLY) for sending me a copy of your really nice *Charlton Spotlight*, and even more graciously, thank you for the delightful and enlightening dedication to PAT BOYETTE.

I read somewhere (few years ago) that PB was a multi-faceted great talent and a nice guy to *boot*! I've always liked what work of his I saw—esp. the one he seemed to dislike most: *Peacemaker*, a super-hero type, wot else.

I never got to meet Pat B. in person, but I was introduced to his work by none other than Charlton's then-editor, Dick Giordano, who smiling *gleefully*, showed me several pages of Pat's work—an assi he'd just sent in. I mean DG (a great artist himself) was *marveling* over Pat's work, handling it with such care! Made me jealous . . . to a degree, anyhow. But I had to agree with him: Boyette's original art *was* beautiful to look at. Had to be satisfied with looking, tho—DG sho' didn't let me *touch* it! (heh)

And speaking of Giordano, he not only hired me (freelance) to do a few stories for Charlton (thanks to friend Roy Thomas' recommendation—he told DG I was fast), but also gave me inking tips that I still *try* to use to this very day!

Re: my "Charlton Days"—they were short-lived. late '66 to maybe late '67. When DG went to DC, I'd hoped he'd send a few morsels my way, but he'd only used me for humorous stuff, which he had NO need for at DC. 'Bout the best thing re: me working for Charlton was meeting and becoming friends with Rocke Mastroserio, who was a source of constant encouragement. I was only over to Derby a coupla times; Rocke and I mostly wrote each other. He thought that with more work, I'd get better, and encouraged me to keep drawing and submittng stuff.

Xal-Kor TM & © 2002 Grass Green

Grass's monumental **Xal-Kor, the Human Cat** *should be available in stores at this very moment. The 100-page comic-sized trade paperback is available for $14 US postpaid ($16 Canada, $17 surface/$21 airmail elsewhere) from TwoMorrows—ask for it at your local comics shop or see the address for TwoMorrows after Roy's letter above.*

And hold onto your hats, because next issue we throw the spotlight on Grass Green in an exclusive interview!

Jack Jackson
Austin, TX

Thanks for sending the Pat Boyette special issue. One of my favorite cartoonist "characters." We used to have long telephone conversations about the comics "industry"—this when *Classics* folded & left both of us with books in the lurch . . .

I've seen *Texas Days of Glory* pub. by Eakin Press & have given it a plug in a recent review of several other comic books for the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*; should be printed this year [2001] sometime.

It's always great to hear from Pat's fellow professionals. Pat's **Texas Days of Glory** *surely deserves wider attention. Jack Jackson's Texas-historical graphic novels (such as* **Comanche Moon** *and* **Los Tejanos***) are masterpieces of their form; all fans of Western comics should check them out immediately!*

Sam Glanzman
Maryland, NY

I'm sorry but I can't help you on the subject of Charlton—my memory is so god-damn bad sometimes I don't remember what I did yesterday—and the only thing I remember (altho I don't "see" it in my mind's eye) is that Pat Masulli carried a pistol tucked away in his belt in back and that I played some poker with— I don't remember who was there, perhaps Joe Gill remembers. As far as remembering dates, places, events, and names I haf'ta tell you my brain's got lot'sa holes in it.

About Mojo [Mojo Press, of Austin, TX]? Well I did a story with Joe Lansdale called "Red Range," I think it was 70 or 80 pgs. I'm still working of course but no great shakes.

Let me know what I can do to help. Art, photos, whatever if I can. You might want to get a hold of Willi Franz, he's got a good memory of Charlton as does Joe Gill. If you write up something of me about Charlton days—good luck! You'll need it.

Detail from "I Could Eat a Horse!" from Mojo Press's **Wild West Show**. © 1996, 2002 Sam Glanzman

Thanks for writing, Sam, and thanks for the offer of help. Legions of comics fans want to know more about your work at Charlton; maybe we can help jog your memory with a future series of spotlights on your war and Western stories. One thing's for sure: Hardly anyone can match you in terms of sheer number of pages at Charlton!

Batton Lash
via e-mail

Many thanks for *Charlton Spotlight*. I really enjoyed it. I always loved Pat Boyette's work, and this issue is a fitting tribute. The production values were first rate and I liked the "low-key" approach—not slick, but very sophisticated.

I always had a soft spot for the Charlton books. Charlton comics were quite possibly the very first periodical I ever subscribed to. (Does anyone remember the special subscription offer? Two dollars would get you FOUR action hero titles delivered in a manila envelope—unfolded, too! I was twelve years old and it was heaven!)

I think your "oral memory" approach is interesting—and brings something new to the table. Hopefully you'll be able to devote an issue to Pete Morisi. In any event, I'll be looking forward to future issues!

Anyone reading this who hasn't yet encountered Batton's **Supernatural Law** *comics series is in for a real treat. We do hope to spread some ink about the Charlton work of PAM in future issues, looking into some lesser-seen examples of his 1950s work.*

Bill Pearson
via e-mail

Very classy magazine! I thought it was going to be a pamphlet of 16 pages or so, but this is a quality fanzine. I intend to read every article, but of course I checked mine first thing and have to apologize for giving you some incorrect information!

Your little blurb saying I'd collaborated on all Boyette's *Flash Gordon* stories struck me. I looked in Overstreet's guide to see Charlton had published seven *FG* issues, and *knew* I hadn't written them all.

After rereading my article, I obviously remembered when I wrote it that Pat only illustrated one of my scripts and mentioned it a couple of times. But when you asked me recently about a certain title, I was sure I had written that too. And then I made the absurd statement that I'd written all the *Flash Gordon* stories, completely forgetting the later issues, which I did *not* write. Joe Gill probably wrote them!

Just to be sure, I went out in the storeroom and dug up my *Flash Gordon* comics and looked at every one from King and Charlton and tried to remember which ones I'd written. (Hey, it's been over thirty years and I've scarcely glanced at them since.) I wrote the King issues 3, 6, 8, and 11 and Charlton issues 12, 13, and 14.

I'm *very* sorry about this because I'm sure you, like me, hate to publish incorrect information. I just got it wrong.

From now on, get verification about anything I tell you, because I'm obviously losing it!

Anyhow, I'll comment later on the rest of the contents. That checklist is pretty interesting, for one thing.

The Charlton information we're able to impart in this magazine would not be nearly as thorough as it is without the invaluable assistance of one of that company's former assistant editors, Bill Pearson. Bill is well known for his phenomenal memory, and somehow we doubt his claim of losing it. . . .

Don Mangus
via e-mail

I offered the *Peacemaker* prelim [on inside front cover] to Jon Cooke for the *CBA* article, but he wanted to use the painting for some reason. Feel free to use it.

This was a commissioned piece ordered up by Scotty Moore. Pat was working on this painting when he fell ill and passed away in the ICU. It was the last thing on his drawing board and Pat did a fine job, his art abilities remained undiminished until the end. The painting was about 80% completed. It was unfinished and Scotty asked for a refund on the down payment he had made. I refunded Scotty's money myself after Pat's passing. I felt this PM commission was a great thing as Pat needed something to take his mind off his troubles. He had done a trial painting of the cover of "Children of Doom," it was great, very rich. I was going to represent Pat in these commissions to the art market. [Pat's daughter] Melissa was sentimental about the painting as it was the last thing on Pat's drawing board. I had to take it and made a jpg scan and sent it to Scotty, but since it was not finished he wanted a refund. Melissa said I could have the painting, as I had repaid Scotty.

By the way, Pat used this old lap drawing board and a small T-square he got as a kid to rule his lettering and borders. He did not measure his lettering lines, he had done so many pages, that he had actually worn notches in the board with his thumbnail and he used these notches to draw the spaced lines!

Illustrator Don Punchatz was helping Pat figure out how to transfer the logo type for the PM recreation with some sort of illustrator technique. Don also did an illustration of Moses for *Boy's Life* using Pat as the model for Moses around this time. I saw the pencil prelim—it was great!

Regarding the *Weird Ones* poster—what a rarity. Bill Fields sent it, so please give him a credit. He lives in San Antonio and I just made contact with him via an eBay sale. He told me that the inventor of the wooden nickel (!) ran ads for his novelty company (Elbee) in comic books. Apparently he often paid for publicity for Pat's films and printed this handbill. A friend of this salesman inherited two of these handbills and Bill got one! Fascinating, no?

We sure would like to see Don Punchatz' depiction of Pat as Moses! But there's always some artistic gem or other that we didn't have room for or couldn't find . . .

John Lustig
via e-mail

I made some copies of the *Eek! The Cat* pages that Pat Boyette and I did. Unfortunately, Pat and I never talked. In fact, I didn't even find out he was doing the art until after I turned in the script.

I do remember being a bit upset when I saw the art because Pat had drawn Eek with crossed eyes in every panel. I think this was probably an attempt to make the art a little funnier.

Other than that, though, I was amazed by Pat's ability to follow the script so faithfully. Often an artist will simplify things a bit to make the work easier, but Pat did everything I asked for in the script and it wasn't the easiest script to draw.

I wish I'd gotten a chance to talk with Pat. From all accounts he was a remarkable guy.

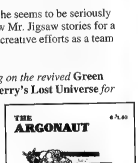
. . . and those Eek! *pages that John generously copied for us are prime examples. We just plain ran out of room this issue for more Boyette artwork. But maybe next time . . . See the following pages for a review of John's hilarious and Charlton-info-rich* **Last Kiss** *comic book series.*

Ron Fortier
via e-mail

Wow, got my copy of *Charlton Spotlight* last week and been wanting to find a few free minutes from all this holiday running around to say thanks so much . . . and that you did a fantastic job. This is a great book and I am recommending it to all my friends on line. I, like most old time fans who really knew what comic creativity is all about, was a Pat Boyette fan and it was so great to read all those wonderful memorials by his friends in the business. I was especially touched by his daughter's comment. You really did something good here, Mike, and all of comic fandom is the richer for it.

Got a letter from Gary a few days back and he seems to be seriously considering my suggestion of doing brand new Mr. Jigsaw stories for a new web site that would be devoted to all our creative efforts as a team over the years. I'll keep you posted.

Ron's best-known comics work is his scripting on the revived **Green Hornet** *for Now Comics and* **Gene Roddenberry's Lost Universe** *for Tekno Comix. Besides screenplays and novels, Ron is currently writing Brother Grim pulp adventures for* **Supernatural Crime** (www.supernaturalcrime.com)*, and producing* **Red River, a Russian Cowboy Odyssey**, *a documentary about the Moscow Symphony Orchestra recording Dimitri Tiomkin's classic movie score for the John Wayne film* **Red River**. *Gary Kato still works in comics and has done work for Children's Television Workshop magazines* **3-2-1 Contact** *and* **Kid City**, *as well as custom caricatures. Gary's association with Argo Press goes way back to his prolific appearances in the SF zine* **Argonaut** *that I began publishing in the 1970s. Nice to have you guys back again!*



Gary's cover to **Argonaut** #6 Summer/Fall 1979, illustrating an Al Manachino story. © 1979, 2002 Argo Press.

Dan Stevenson
via e-mail

Your *Charlton Spotlight* issue was magnificent! Truly a labor of love. I have shown it to about ten people and I hope they have ordered copies. I have gotten about fifteen e-mails from people who had questions about my index. Some said "send me a copy of every one of

your indexes." Needless to say I didn't do that as I have hundreds and want to control where and how the information is disseminated.

We can appreciate that, Dan. It's a lot of hard work compiling accurate checklists, and thanks for sharing yours with us!

Bob Gosney
via e-mail

I just found the Web page for the *Charlton Spotlight* and was just about floored!

I worked at Charlton Press from 1966 till 1976. I was the photographer/color separator that photographed all of the comic art (black and white originals) and the color overlays. At one point I had a stack of the old originals of Steve Ditko's art for the Blue Beetle, but it got lost somewhere over the years.

What a surprise to see this Web site. I never dreamed that anyone remembered Charlton Comics, let alone had the slightest interest in any of the old publications

I had quite a bit of close personal interaction with many of the artists and editors during my time there. Sal Gentile, George Wildman, Rocke, Steve Ditko, etc., etc. . . What great creative minds.

Thanks for the Web site and the trip down memory lane.

This one came out of the blue, but all further attempts to contact Bob have been fruitless. Bob, if you're reading this, please drop us a line and tell us more about Charlton Press!

Marty Baumann
www.martybaumann.com

I just wanted to drop you a note and tell you how much I've enjoyed *Charlton Spotlight*. The design is clean and unpretentious, the writing and editing are heartfelt and well-informed. I look forward to the next issue and wonder if you'd like to use a page from the story Pat did for me, his last published work? I'd be happy to scan one for you and send it along as a jpeg. Let me know, and keep up the good work.

See Marty's cogent memoir of working with Pat elsewhere in this issue. with two swell sample pages. And be sure to check out Marty's cool "Crater Kid" strip on line!

Mike Curtis
Shanda Fantasy Arts
P.O. Box 545
Greenbrier, AR 72058
shandafa@cyberback.com

I was delighted with *Charlton Spotlight*. I was not too familiar with Pat Boyette, but upon reading all the bio material realized that many of the true "journeymen" artists of the 40's, 50's and 60's share multi talents in several fields.

I especially liked the story about Spencer Spook and will now have to look for that. I used to write Casper and Richie Rich myself back in the 80's for Harvey.

I do have to say my favorite part of the book though was the Charlton checklist. I had suspected that *Super Brat* eventually became *Li'l Genius*. I have the first issue of *Giant* from Charlton, and there he is, with his parents, but no super cape. Someday I hope to find *Super Brat* #1 and complete my collection

By the way, Charlton also published (I believe) a *Hee-Haw* magazine with some comic content, but most of it was fumetti style.

But being a fact hound, I love to go through the Charlton index just to see the fascinating material they did produce. I pity the fellow who put this together.

Of course, there's a worse job. Can you imagine trying to do an ICW or Super Comics checklist? I do have one of the Super *Super Brat* reprints.

Did you get the *Atomic Mouse* I sent? Vince [Fago] just saw it, as he escaped from the hospital two days ago. He enjoyed the book and there'll be more about him in *Atomic Mouse* #1, coming from us in September 2001.

SFA's Atomic Mouse, *with John Lustig's* **Last Kiss**, *is some of the exciting new Charlton-related comics being done right now. See our reviews in the following pages*

Nick Caputo
via e-mail

Although I left a message on the Charlton group list, I wanted to send a more personal note to you to commend you on *Charlton Spotlight*. Not since the late, lamented *Charlton Bullseye* has there been a publication devoted to this most neglected company. There is much to mine within those pages, and while I won't repeat myself, I'm glad there are people like you who are researching and tracking down information on the company. I love getting into the history of a company (I've been spending many years studying Marvel Comics from 1961-1970, working on putting together a book on that subject sometime in the future) and I hope that you can unearth more about the company and the varied creators that made it something worth talking about.

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears!
AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

SFA's Atomic Mouse © 2002 Shanda Fantasy Arts. Illustration © 2002 Charles Ettinger.

While I've been busy on my own project and working on more articles for *Comic Book Marketplace*, I'd be glad to contribute to your publication in the future. Let me know if there's anything in particular you're looking for. While I can probably be called the resident Ditko expert (I have most of his work from the 1950s to the present, including all his Charlton output—I think!), I have a great deal of Charlton material and enjoy many of their artists. I've had much assistance in many matters from Robin Snyder, who I see has assisted you also. With people like him behind you, you should go far. Good luck!

Nick, you're our kind of guy! An article on Steve Ditko in these pages would be a natural. The problem is, where to begin? Ditko drew so many pages for Charlton from its early 1950s explosion to its last, staggering days in the mid-1980s. See Blake Bell's Ditko site for the most comprehensive and complete checklist of known Ditko work: **www.ditko.comics.org.**

Gene Kehoe
1421 Bertch Ave., Waterloo, IA 50702

I really, really appreciate the *Charlton Spotlight* #1 that caught me by surprise in the mail today. You got that baby out quickly, and it's a lovely job. Already read half of it. Boyette was obviously a real gentleman and a real pro. I have a ton of Boyette art as I own a ton of

Silver Age comics, and I never really had a positive or negative opinion of his art, but I have a new appreciation for the man now. I knew from Evanier's column [in *CBG*] what a renaissance man he was. He could do so many things well! This mag is a wonderful tribute to him. Coincidentally enough, I had just purchased *Shadows From Beyond* #50 a couple weeks ago (loved that wild Ditko cover) and didn't realize until now that it contained Boyette's first pro work! Great! Also remember picking up the very different *Cosmic Book* when it came out, and still keep it in a convenient place to look at now and then.

Been getting my eBay comic selling business going these past few months, so had to put *It's a Fanzine* on the back burner, but #49 is 95% done and will be in your mailbox when you least expect it! Will Gary Usher be in future issues of *Spotlight*? I'm still planning on a Nature Boy article and a Charlton 1958 giants article in *IAF* #50.

Write to Gene for info on past & future issues of It's a Fanzine.

Steve Mitchell
Greenville, TX

I received your letter and the first issue of *Charlton Spotlight* back at the first of December, but I have only now had a chance to sit down and actually start reading (as opposed to skimming) the magazine. And I really like what you and your contributors have done, so much so that I am enclosing my $10.00 check in the earnest hope that you will be able to bring out those "next two issues."

You asked about my friend who had known Pat Boyette. His name was Bob Webb. At the time I knew him, around 1976 and for a few years thereafter, Bob was an art student at North Texas State University in Denton (now the University of North Texas). I was in school there also; for some reason, even though I was a philosophy major, most of my friends were art majors—and comics fans. Bob later relocated to New York City, and I have lost touch with him since then.

I was interested to read the various comments about Pat Boyette not particularly caring for the superhero genre. So I imagine he wasn't thrilled at the prospect of working on the *Tarantula* strip for Atlas, although possibly the horror angle made that feature a little more attractive to him. Personally, I would love to see a revival of the Tarantula, although I suppose the 1970s Atlas characters are doomed to perpetual oblivion.

I found the two [Charlton] issues of *Comic Book Artist* to be a nice complement to what you are doing with *Charlton Spotlight*. I do hope you will be able to continue As a suggestion, a general overview of the Charlton publishing history might be useful to those who are not totally knowledgeable about the group

Steve was the first person to send in an order for Charlton Spotlight *#1 months before it appeared. And a comprehensive outline of Charlton publishing history is in the works for a future ish.*

Mad Mona
San Antonio, TX

Enjoyed the tribute to Pat Boyette issue. The first issue was really nice quality on the first time out. Would hope you may do an all Steve Ditko issue down the line. Try to run photo comic book covers. Really hope you will be fan supported on this fanzine.

As for photo covers, how does this issue grab you?

Ouch! Illustration © 2002 Kevin Duncan; Rog-2000 © 2002 the respective copyright holder.

Chris Rumsey
Bessie, OK

Congratulations on the debut issue of *Charlton Spotlight*.

It was to my surprise and delight that I read of the tributes to Pat Boyette by his colleagues and friends. My favorite tribute was by Steve Skeates who has always been one of my favorite writers.

Under "Bibliographical Features" I appreciated the Pat Boyette index compiled by Don Mangus. I was pleased to see the Charlton Comics checklist. I was surprised at how many of the comics I had not seen in the past.

I thought all the writers did an excellent job. I was pleased with the issue and I am looking forward to future issues.

Chris is looking for original art, file materials, and information related to the great Gold Key **Dagar the Invincible** *artist Jesse Santos, as well as articles and information about writer Don Glut. Write to Chris at P.O. Box 114, Bessie, OK 73622*

Link Yaco
via e-mail

In '91, I had the once-in-a-lifetime chance to script an 8-pager for Pat Boyette, for the Hamilton/Gladstone B&W horror magazine *Grave Tales*. He did a fantastic job on my modest script, complete with detailed halftoning. He put a lot more effort into those 8 pages than he had to. When I saw the printed result, I sent him a letter to tell him how much I liked it and how I always thought he was one of the most original stylists of the era. He surprised me by sending me the original art for the splash page! I called him up to thank him and he didn't brush me off like the overgrown fanboy that I am, but chatted with me comfortably at some length. What a gentleman. I was intrigued by his style and asked him if Milton Caniff was an influence and much to my surprise he said that he was far more influenced by Alex Raymond and *Wally Wood*! There were two schools of style in those days—the Milt Caniff school among the Gold Key artists (such as Jesse Marsh) and the Alex Raymond school among the New Yorkers at Marvel and DC. When I revisited Pat's work, I could see that despite his Caniff-like brushwork, the underlying forms and composition were actually more East Coast than West.

I got to speak with Pat a few times over the years. He never seemed to mind when I called him up—the last time was in connection with a Wally Wood article I wrote for *Comic Book Marketplace* in 1996. He was a genuinely nice guy and a remarkably imaginative artist. Luminaries such as Jim Steranko have praised Pat's work—and no wonder!

Thanks much for sharing your Pat Boyette memories with us, Link!

OK, now it's your turn! Please let me know how you liked (or didn't like) this issue and what you'd like to see in future issues. Write to: Michael Ambrose, Editor, P.O. Box 4201, Austin, TX 78765-4201, **mikeargo@flash.net.**

And while you're at it, please consider dropping a subscription check in the envelope (or making an electronic transfer through PayPal, payable to my e-mail address) to ensure that you receive the next two issues as they become available. See subscription info on page 1.

Let's keep rambling . . .

OOPS! In *Charlton Spotlight* #1, I misattributed copyright to the estate of Pat Boyette for the Spencer Spook art on page 11. Rather, attribution should have been TM & © 1986, 2000 Ron Frantz. I regret the error and will continue to make every effort to give correct copyright notices in these pages.

I also discovered missing entries to the Pat Boyette index that I *swear* were in there at some point before we went to press . . . those entries have been restored in the index addenda on pages 17–18 of this issue.

COMING NEXT ISSUE I hope to put together a substantial tribute to the late **Tom Sutton**. Depending on how things page out, I'll also feature interviews with **Jose Delbo**, **Henry Scarpelli**, and **Grass Green**, and much more that at the moment is still not nailed down. But I guarantee that whatever the final contents, whenever it finally appears, *Charlton Spotlight* #3 will be worth the wait!

BACK ISSUES There's only one. But copies of *Charlton Spotlight* #1 are in such short supply that I suggest you send me $6.95 ($7.50 Canada, $12.50 elsewhere) right away for a copy if you missed the issue, because I've only a handful left and no plans to reprint it.

news & reviews

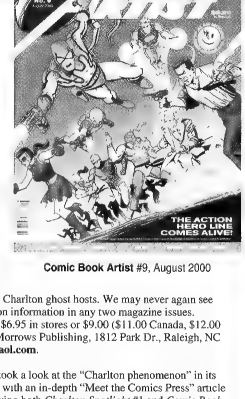
LINKS I'd like to recommend a few Web sites, beginning with contributing editor **Ramon Schenk**'s site devoted specifically to *Charlton Spotlight*: **http://users.raketnet.nl/charltonspotlight/**. The site is designed and maintained by Ramon, and eventually you'll see a lot more special *CS* content there, including selected articles from past issues, more Charlton covers, and extensive checklists. While you're there, browse on over to Ramon's general Charlton Comics site for cover images aplenty: **http://users.raketnet.nl/charltoncomics/**. And stop by Ramon's Weird Comics site: **http://www.ramonschenk.nl/**.

Ron Frantz, our second contributing editor, also maintains a couple of sites that will interest you. Ron's ongoing accounts of his days as a comics publisher and the relationships generated with many of Charlton's creators are an integral part of *Charlton Spotlight*. For a thorough index of the complete line of ACE Comics that Ron published, see the ACE Comics Collection at **http://www.hometown.aol.com/magilla445/magillaindex.html**. And don't forget to order Ron's great book, **Fandom: Confidential**, which will appeal to anyone who was involved at all in fandom in the 1960s and '70s. See the ad on page 38 in this issue; you can read more about **FC** here: **http://hometown.aol.com/midguard20/Midguardindex.html**. Ron tells me he has several more book projects in the works, about which I won't spill the beans at this time, but I understand that **Spencer Spook** will be making a return engagement to the comics stage. . . .

Take a look at The Borderland: **http://www.mpeters77.freeserve.co.uk/borderland.html**. John Peters, my British small press publisher buddy, maintains this eclectic and informative site, featuring SF & horror fiction plus music news and reviews, but I especially want to draw your attention to John's "teaser" for **Albert J. Manachino**'s novel **The Box Hunters**, forthcoming from Argo Press. See my ad in the inside back cover of this issue for more information.

The **charlton list group** is the on-line place to meet and talk with others of a Charlton mind, including many of the contributors to this magazine as well as pros like **Steve Skeates** and **Nicola Cuti**. The charlton-l began in January 2000 and currently has more than 130 members. To join, go to: **http://groups.yahoo.com/group/charlton-l/**.

THE CHARLTON STORY I noted earlier that we've started to see a groundswell of interest in Charlton Comics just over the past couple of years. A major force in that wave is **Comic Book Artist** magazine. Anyone reading *Charlton Spotlight* who hasn't yet seen **CBA**'s two Charlton issues (#9, Aug 2000, and #12, Mar. 2001) has probably been living in an alternate dimension. Editor **Jon B. Cooke** continues to do marvelous things with **CBA**, and these two issues will stand as landmarks in the field of Charlton comics history. The sheer mass of interviews, artwork, and other information contained here is unparalleled: in #9, Jon and others talk with Charles Santangelo, Joe Gill, Dick Giordano, Steve Skeates, Dennis "Sergius O'Shaugnessy" O'Neil, Roy Thomas, Pete Morisi, Jim Aparo, Pat Boyette (posthumously), Frank McLaughlin, Will Frantz, and Alan Moore, and offer up thorough historical context and analysis pieces, all wrapped behind a superb Dick Giordano cover featuring the Charlton action heroes. **CBA** #12 focuses on Charlton comics of the 1970s, interviewing George Wildman, Nicola Cuti, Joe Staton, John Byrne, Tom Sutton, Mike Zeck, Jack Keller, Pete Morisi (again), Warren Sattler, Bob Layton, Roger Stern, Rich Larson, and Dan Reed, with commentary by Alex Toth, a reprinting of the landmark 1973 **Cartoonist PROfiles** article on Charlton, a brand-new, two-page **E-Man** story by Nic Cuti and Joe Staton, further analysis of Charlton's last days of comics publishing, and a highly interesting look at the confusing Charlton copyright picture—fronted by a beautiful Joe Staton cover of the Charlton ghost hosts. We may never again see such density of Charlton information in any two magazine issues. **Comic Book Artist** is $6.95 in stores or $9.00 ($11.00 Canada, $12.00 elsewhere) from TwoMorrows Publishing, 1812 Park Dr., Raleigh, NC 27605, **JonBCooke@aol.com**.



Comic Book Artist #9, August 2000

The Comics Journal took a look at the "Charlton phenomenon" in its issue #234, June 2001, with an in-depth "Meet the Comics Press" article by Rich Kreiner reviewing both *Charlton Spotlight* #1 and *Comic Book Artist* #'s 9 and 12. I appreciate the attention **TCJ** has given us, though I'm still not real sure whether to call this a positive review or not. Here's a quote that fairly well sums it up: "If you know yourself to be a card-carrying member of this tribe and possess a degree of equanimity towards your fellows, *Charlton Spotlight* is an opportunity to circle around the flame. There's a good chance the disclosures will be unlike any others in print." Kreiner admits to having a blind spot where the virtues of Pat Boyette's work are concerned, and his view of the Charlton Comics Group in the place of American comic books as a whole is not, to say the least, a charitable one. But his column thoughtfully illuminates (perhaps unintentionally) many of the very reasons why we like Charlton comics despite their flaws.

NEW CHARLTON COMICS? There are two current comic book series that are producing what might be called "new" Charlton comics work. The first of them, John Lustig's **Last Kiss**, will be familiar to regular readers of **Comics Buyer's Guide**, where John's **Last Kiss** panel cartoon has run for some years. For those unfamiliar with **LK**, John takes the forgotten Charlton **First Kiss** series (40 issues, Dec. 1957 to Jan. 1965), to which he bought the rights and file materials when Charlton sold off its comics properties in the late 1980s, and recasts selected panels from the original stories with new dialog, often having comics-related themes, to hilarious effect. Now John has brought forth a full-blown **LK** comic book, and I can't recommend it highly enough. The first issue (Feb. 2001) features several redone romance sagas, the first in a series of reader contests (wherein John

invites *us* to rewrite a story), and an interview with none other than **Joe Gill**, who probably wrote a majority of the original scripts. **LK** #2 (Aug. 2001) pushes the envelope by headlining a brand-new story, scripted by John Lustig and illustrated by Charlton romance master **Dick Giordano** himself, who drew many of the originals that **LK** uses—plus there's an interview with Giordano in this issue, not to mention a new contest and results from #1. **LK** #3 (Feb. 2002) goes over the top, having another new story by John Lustig, drawn by **Ernie Colon**, that takes its cue from a certain Riverdale setting and its inspiration from the late **Dan DeCarlo**. There's also an Ernie Colon interview, contest results (and a new contest), and a reprinted **Nic Cuti & Joe Staton** tale from Charlton's **Haunted Love** #1 (Apr. 1973) that is truly exquisite. All this plus letters pages and plenty of reader-friendly interaction make for a quite fun package. See the advertisement for **Last Kiss** on our inside back cover and order yours today!

John Lustig's **Last Kiss** #2, August 2001, and #3, February 2002. Covers by Dick Giordano.

The second example of "new" Charlton comics being done right now is **SFA's Atomic Mouse**, published by Mike and Carole Curtis's Shanda Fantasy Arts (who also publish John Lustig's **Last Kiss**) Mike and Carole have brought back **Atomic Mouse** from Charlton comic limbo in an all-new incarnation that springboards from **Vince Fago**'s original 1950s character. The new AM's first appearance is in **SFA Spotlight** #11 (May 2001), with a new origin story by Mike Curtis, Charles Ettinger, and Steve Addlesee, along with several shorter strips and—of special interest to Charlton fans—an interview with Vince Fago, illustrated with photographs and a brand-new AM pin-up drawing by Vince (inked by *CS* buddy **Jim Amash**)! Atomic Mouse now has his own series, the first issue appearing in September 2001, and future issues sound promising (including, I'm told, a "Secret Origin of Atomic Mouse" with a reprint of the original origin from 1953). Run down to your comics shop today to pick up these great comics, or order directly from Shanda Fantasy Arts, P.O. Box 545, Greenbrier, AR 72058, $4.99 per copy (& probably extra for S&H), **shandafa@cyberback.com**.

SFA Spotlight #11, May 2001

ALTER EGO And speaking of **Vince Fago**: Roy Thomas's **Alter Ego** v. 3 #11 (Nov. 2001) features a jumbo-sized interview with the former Timely editor and Charlton artist, conducted by **Jim Amash**, and profusely illustrated with rare art and photos. Not only that, but Roy talks with **Mickey Spillane** about the novelist's early days as a comics writer. Backing up a couple of issues, check out the **FCA** #68 section of **Alter Ego** v. 3 #9 (July 2001), wherein Golden Age artist **Marc Swayze** gives a fascinating account of his brief staff tenure with Charlton in 1954-55, swept up in Charlton's "explosion" following the company's acquisition of several Fawcett titles, on through his abrupt departure after the devastating Connecticut flood of August 1955. Marc's column provides valuable insight into a poorly understood era in Charlton's history. Finally, *Charlton Spotlight*'s own **Ron Frantz** has an article on **C.C. Beck** in the **FCA** #71 section of **Alter Ego** v. 3 #12 (Jan. 2002), discussing Ron's collaboration with the former Captain Marvel artist on Beck's comic novel **On Top of Ol' Lympos**. Like everything else I take note of in these pages, these issues of **Alter Ego** are must-haves.

HOT-ROD COMICS ON TRACK **Pete Millar** may be the last of the old-time hot-rod cartoonists; he certainly is the most visible. For years he has almost singlehandedly kept this comics subgenre alive through his magazines **DRAGcartoons** and **Drag Comics**. Now Pete has released his monumental **History of Hotrod Comic Books** CD-ROM, indexing more than 800 comics (including, naturally, all the Charlton titles), with artist information, comic book ads, miscellaneous comics with a hot-rod theme, single-panel gags, and much more.

Altogether it's an incredible, one-of-a-kind digital archive of hot-rod comics history that, at the laughably low price of $14.95 (& $4.50 S&H) is a must-have for anyone who misses the old-time drag toons or would like to learn more about them. Other CDs available from **Millarkey** include two volumes of **Alex Toth**'s car-toon work and one each of **Ed "Big Daddy"**

Roth and **Wonder Warthog** comics, as well as half a dozen disks comprising a complete collection of Pete's 45 years of hot-rod cartooning. Last but not least, Pete's excellent **DRAGcartoons** magazine (#51 is the latest, $5.00 & $1.50 S&H) gives you the warm fuzzies like nothing else can (check out the great Wonder Warthog strip in #51!). Order from Pete Millar at Millarkey, 28611 Golden Meadow Dr., Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90275, **millarkey@aol.com**, **www.LAFFyerASPHALT.com**. Tell 'im *Charlton Spotlight* sent ya!

DRAGcartoons #51, October 2000

FANDOM **Bill Schelly** has done it again with one of his best books yet, and the title says it all. **Sense of Wonder: A Life in Comic Fandom** is new from TwoMorrows Publishing and I highly recommend it (as well as Bill's other unique volumes of comics fandom history from his own Hamster Press, such as **The Golden Age of Comic Fandom**, **Fandom's Finest Comics** vols. 1 & 2, the brand-new **Comic Fandom Reader**, and many more). **Sense of Wonder** is a personal account of Bill's discovery of and exploits in comics fandom in the 1960s and '70s, and like Ron Frantz's **Fandom: Confidential** will resonate with those who were there, immersed in comics and fanzines as Bill was. Illustrated with more than 150 photographs and rare illustrations from C.C. Beck, Steve Ditko, Jack Kirby, Gil Kane, and others, the book retails for $15.95 and is available in your local comics shop or from TwoMorrows, 1812 Park Dr., Raleigh, NC 27605. Hamster Press is at P.O. Box 27471, Seattle, WA 98125, **WSchelly@aol.com**.

Sense of Wonder, by Bill Schelly

RBCC #1, May 2000. What a cover!

Jim Van Hise has resurrected his venerable fanzine **Rocket's Blast–Comicollector** in a new, slick, book-format incarnation, just as thick and comprehensive as the old zine was. The first new issue #1 appeared in May 2000 and features a 46-page examination of **Steve Ditko**'s 1950s work, which was of course produced overwhelmingly for Charlton. The article summarizes scores of Ditko's most memorable stories and is heavily illustrated. The Ditko piece alone would be worth your $9.95, but also in #1 you'll find a treatment of the second-generation **E.C.** fanzines (such as *Spa Fon* and *Squa Tront*); "Sea of Blood," a remarkable 12-page war comics story by **Ron Wilber**; an article/interview by **Gil Kane**; an examination of the pulp fiction career of **Orson Welles**, and a gallery of **Ed Cartier**'s Shadow pulp illustrations. **RBCC** #2, also available, is a special Edgar Rice Burroughs issue. Single copies are $9.95 & $3.50 postage, $30 for three issues, from James Van Hise, 57754 Onaga Trail, Yucca Valley, CA 92284, Jmvanhise@aol.com.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The **Connecticut Historical Society** in Hartford, Connecticut, is planning an exhibition on **Connecticut and the Development of the American Comic Book.** The exhibition is scheduled to open in 2004 and will be on view for six months. It will focus primarily on the period from 1933 when a Connecticut firm, Eastern Color Printing, issued the very first modern-format comic book in America—and the world—through 1976 when the state's last major publisher, Charlton, began to decrease its output of original material. Charlton, located in Derby, Connecticut, will feature prominently in the exhibition.

This exhibit will be produced in collaboration with seven key comics historians, including Trina Robbins and Ron Goulart. The proposed exhibition will, for the first time, introduce the general public to Connecticut's important role in the development of the comic book. It will help visitors gain—in an engaging way—an appreciation for comic books as a medium that has both reflected, and helped shape, American popular culture.

CHS would be interested in hearing from collectors or comic book professionals who are interested in lending materials or information related to Charlton. Please direct all inquiries to Andrew Goldstein, Exhibition Researcher, at (860) 236-5621 x. 256, or e-mail **andrew_goldstein@chs.org**. The Connecticut Historical Society is located at 1 Elizabeth Street, Hartford, CT 06105. Please visit our Web site at **http://www.chs.org**.

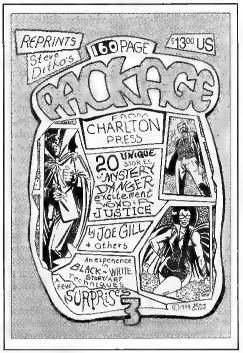
STEVE DITKO

Comic Book Marketplace is an essential magazine for the serious comic book collector-investor (which pretty much leaves me out), well worth taking a look at for its lush graphics, high production values, and wealth of information about Golden and Silver Age comics. Charlton fans will want to pick up issue #84 (Aug. 2001), which features **Nick Caputo**'s "Neglected Ditko" survey, focusing on Steve Ditko's horror work at Charlton in the 1970s (probably the first such article in fandom to do so) and pointing out a rich selection of the best of that master's body of work under the colorful bullseye logo **CBM**, edited by Russ Cochran, is available for $5.95 at comics shops or from Gemstone Publishing, **www.gemstonepub.com**

CBM #84, August 2001

Steve Ditko's 160-Page Package, vol. 3, is not to be missed, for it features no fewer than twenty of Ditko's most memorable Charlton weird stories from the pages of **Ghostly Tales**, **Ghostly Haunts**, **The Many Ghosts of Doctor Graves**, and **Ghost Manor**. The introduction is by **Joe Gill** (who wrote nearly all the stories) and the dedication by Ditko to Gill is wonderful. This book is akin to the Marvel Comics "Essential" volumes in terms of production, and indeed is an essential addition to your Charlton comics library. Great thanks to publisher **Robin Snyder** for keeping this material in print and offering it in a format that shows off Steve Ditko's glorious art to fullest effect. Available in bookstores

or direct from the publisher Robin Snyder, 2284 Yew St. Rd. #B6, Bellingham, WA 98226, **RSComics@aol.com**, $13.00 & $2.00 postage. And if you're interested in hearing what Ditko has to say about his co-creation of **Spider-Man**, drop an extra $2 in the envelope for an issue of Robin's excellent monthly newsletter, **The Comics**.



Steve Ditko's 160-Page Package, vol. 3

DENNY O'NEIL

If you like *Charlton Spotlight*, you should sample **The O'Neil Observer**, dedicated to the story-telling of **Denny O'Neil** and the craft of comic book writing. The quarterly print magazine, and the companion Web site **www.oneilobserver.com**, offer fascinating looks primarily at Denny's DC work, though his early writing at Charlton and Marvel are also covered. The magazine isn't limited to the work of O'Neil: all of Silver Age to current comics are grist for its mill. The latest issue I've seen is #3, Summer 2001, featuring a tribute to **Rich Morrissey**, Denny's "From the (Cyber) Den" column, an interview with O'Neil by **Link Yaco**, an article by **Steve Skeates**, and much, much more. Check them out on line and send $5 for a sample issue to Bob Brodsky, Childhood Summer Publications, 33 East Normandy Dr., West Hartford, CT 06107.

The O'Neil Observer #3, Summer 2001

CHARLTON ON THE AIR

A colorful covey of Charlton comics creators came to the **2000 Big Apple Comic Con** on Saturday, Sept. 8, 2000, with two historic Charlton reunion panels featuring **Joe Gill**, **Sam Glanzman**, **George Wildman**, **Will Franz**, **Joe Staton**, and **Dennis O'Neil**, with **CBA** editor **Jon B. Cooke** moderating. Alas, I was unable to attend the con, but fortunately both panels were taped and have since been broadcast on the **"'Nuff Said"** show hosted by **Ken Gale** and **Ed Menje** that airs Tuesday evenings on WBAI-Pacifica 99.5 FM (NY). If you weren't at the con or didn't hear the broadcasts, keep an eye on the show's Web site (**www.nuffsaid.net**), where past shows are archived, and eventually (we hope) the two panels will be available for on-line listening.

Remember, Kids . . .
Charlton Comics Give You More!

CHARLTON CHECKLIST The following year-by-year checklist of Charlton comics was provided through the courtesy of Dan Stevenson, who has personally seen 99.5% of the books. Mike Tiefenbacher was also a major source of the data. In future issues we will provide a series of expanded versions of this checklist, including proof/subsequent title and refined month/year data as this information becomes available. The ultimate goal is a complete index of all Charlton comics. Your input is not only desirable but essential!

Please send any corrections to Dan Stevenson, 127D W. Glaucus St., Leucadia, CA 92024, **Dan Stevenson@sparta.com**, and also to *Charlton Spotlight*, Argo Press, P.O. Box 4201, Austin, TX 78765, **mikeargo@flash.net.**

An assortment of Charlton foreign-language editions.

FANDOM: Confidential
***by* Ron Frantz**

Introduction by **Robert Sampson** • *Cover illustration by* **Pete Morisi**

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Charlton Comics Checklist: Year by Year

Part 1: 1944–1954

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Compiled by Dan Stevenson, with assistance from Mike Tiefenbacher. Edited by Michael Ambrose.

Year, Titles, Issues Published, and Total Number of Comics Published per Year

1944

Yellowjacket Comics 1 (9/44) - 4 (12/44)	**4**

1945

Yellowjacket Comics 5 (1/45) - 6 (12/45)	2
Zoo Funnies 1 (11/45) - 2 (12/45)	2
	4

1946

Jack in the Box 1 (2/46)	1
Jack in the Box 11 (10/46) - 12 (12/46)	2
Marvels of Science 1 (3/46) - 4 (6/46)	4
TNT Comics 1 (2/46)	1
Yellowjacket Comics 7 (1/46) - 10 (6/46)	4
Zoo Funnies 3 (1/46) - 8 (11/46)	6
	18

1947

Jack in the Box 13 (4/47) - 16 (11-12/48)	4
Zoo Funnies 9 (1/47) - 14 (12/47)	6
	10

1948

Cowboy Western Comics 17 (7/48) - 19 (11/48)	3
Tim McCoy 16 (10/48) - 17 (12-1/48-49)	2
Zoo Funnies 15 (1/48)	1
	6

1949

Cowboy Western Comics 20 (1/49) - 25 (12/49)	6
Pictorial Love Stories 22 (10/49)	1
Tim McCoy 18 (2-3/49) - 21 (8-9/49)	4
	11

1950

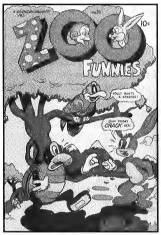
Cowboy Western Comics 26 (2/50) - 30 (12/50)	5
Pictorial Love Stories 23 (1/50) - 26 (7/50)	4
	9

1951

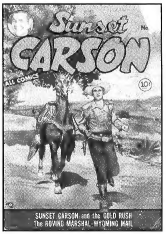
Cowboy Western Comics 31 (2-3/51) - 36 (12-1/51-52)	6
Crime and Justice 1 (3/51) - 4 (11/51)	4

cont. next page

Yellowjacket Comics #1, September 1944



Zoo Funnies #15, January 1948



Sunset Carson Comics #1, February 1951

Hot Rods and Racing Cars 1 (11/51)	1
Lawbreakers 1 (3/51) - 4 (12/51)	4
Sunset Carson Comics 1 (2/51) - 4 (?/51)	4
True Life Secrets 1 (3-4/51) - 4 (11/51)	4
	23

1952

Cowboy Western Comics 37 (2-3/52) - 39 (8/52)	3
Crime and Justice 5 (1/52) - 10 (11/52)	6
Hot Rods and Racing Cars 2 (1/52) - 7 (11-12/52)	6
Lawbreakers 5 (3/52) - 9 (10-11/52)	5
Racket Squad in Action 1 (5-6/52) - 4 (12/52)	4
Space Adventures 1 (7/52) - 3 (11/52)	3
Space Western 40 (10/52) - 41 (11-12/52)	2
Thing!, The 1 (2/52) - 5 (10-11/52)	5
True Life Secrets 5 (1/52) - 10 (11/52)	6
	40

Racket Squad in Action #1, May–June 1952

1953

Atomic Mouse 1 (3/53) - 5 (11/53)	5
Cowboy Western Comics 46 (10/53)	1
Cowboy Western Heroes 47 (12/53)	1
Crime and Justice 11 (1/53) - 16 (11/53)	6
Eh! 1 (12/53)	1
Hot Rods and Racing Cars 8 (2/53) - 13 (12/53)	6
Lawbreakers Suspense Stories 10 (1/53) - 15 (11/53)	6
Peter Paul's 4-in-1 Jumbo Comic Book 1 (1953)	1
Racket Squad in Action 5 (2/53) - 9 (10/53)	5
Space Adventures 4 (1/53) - 8 (9/53)	5
Space Western 42 (2/53) - 45 (8/53)	4
Thing!, The 6 (1/53) - 11 (11-12/53)	6
True Life Secrets 11 (1/53) - 16 (11/53)	6
Zoo Funnies 1 (7/53) - 3 (11/53)	3
	56

Peter Paul's 4 in 1 Jumbo Comic Book #1, 1953

1954

Atomic Mouse 6 (1-2/54) - 10 (12-1/54-55)	5
Cowboy Western 49 (5-6/54) - 52 (12/54)	4
Cowboy Western Heroes 48 (spring 54)	1
Crime and Justice 17 (2/54) - 21 (11/54)	5
Eh! 2 (2/54) - 7 (11-12/54)	6
Funny Animals 84 (4/54) - 87 (10-11/54)	4
Gabby Hayes Western 51 (12/54)	1
Hot Rods and Racing Cars 14 (2/54) - 19 (11/54)	6
Lash LaRue Western 47 (3-4/54) - 52 (12-1/54-55)	6
?Li'l Genius 1 (?/54) - ??? [exist?]	1 +
My Little Margie 1 (7/54) - 4 (11-12/54)	4
Racket Squad in Action 10 (1/54) - 13 (10-11/54)	4
Rocky Lane Western 56 (2/54) - 64 (12/54)	9
Romantic Story 23 (5/54) - 27 (12/54)	5
Six-Gun Heroes 24 (1/54) - 31 (12/54)	8
Soldier and Marine Comics 11 (12/54)	1
Space Adventures 9 (winter 54) - 13 (10-11/54)	5
Strange Suspense Stories 16 (1-2/54) - 22 (11/54)	7
Sweethearts 122 (3/54)	1
Sweethearts 23 (5/54) - 27 (12/54)	5
Tex Ritter Western 21 (3/54) - 26 (11-12/54)	6
Thing!, The 12 (2/54) - 17 (11/54)	6
This Magazine Is Haunted 15 (2/54) - 21 (11/54)	7
True Life Secrets 17 (1-2/54) - 23 (11-12/54)	7
TV Teens 14 (2/54) - 15 (4/54); 3 (6/54) - 5 (10-11/54)	5
Zoo Funnies 4 (1-2/54) - 8 (10-11/54)	5
	124+

Strange Suspense Stories #18, May 1954

End Part 1

Last Kiss

THE CHARLTON COMIC THAT NEVER EXISTED ...UNTIL NOW!

IN 1987, JOHN LUSTIG BOUGHT THE RIGHTS TO FIRST KISS, AN OLD CHARLTON COMIC BOOK SERIES! AN ACT OF GENIUS? YOU BET!
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COMIC BOOKS WITHOUT SUPERHEROES? THAT'S THE DUMBEST THING SINCE...
...UNCLE WALDO TIED A CHICKEN TO HIS HEAD AND WENT FOX HUNTING!

Highlights from Last Kiss #2: The Dick Giordano Issue

"Widow Ms. Muffet" is the tragic tale of a beautiful woman who is having trouble finding a fiancé...with a pulse! New art by Dick Giordano from a Lustig script!

"Royal Romance" -- They're royalty with an attitude! Two sibling princesses come to the U.S. to have some fun. But can America survive their visit? Art by Giordano.

"Oh, Darling! You're Such an Animal!" -- Need a career change? Try selling pets door-to-door! Giordano inks.

Dick Giordano Interview! Charlton's former editor explains why romances are more fun to draw then superheroes!

"Remember to Forget Me!" -- Is the man whom Ann rescues her true love? Or is he merely another "no-good bucket of scum" like other men? Art by Vince Colletta Studio

"It's a wonderful collection of sadistic romantic mirth with one story ("Remember to Forget Me") being so good I darn near hurt myself laughing." -- Tony Isabella

Last Kiss #2
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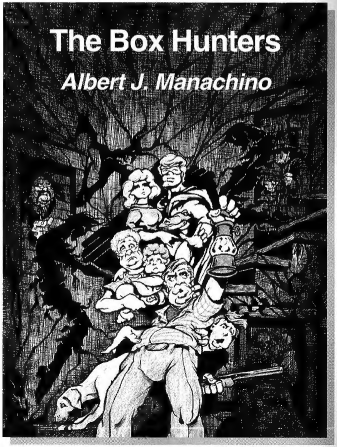
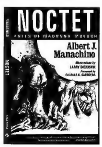


To learn more about **Albert J. Manachino** and to read chapter excerpts from ***The Box Hunters,*** visit **http://www.mpeters77.freeserve.co.uk/borderland.html**



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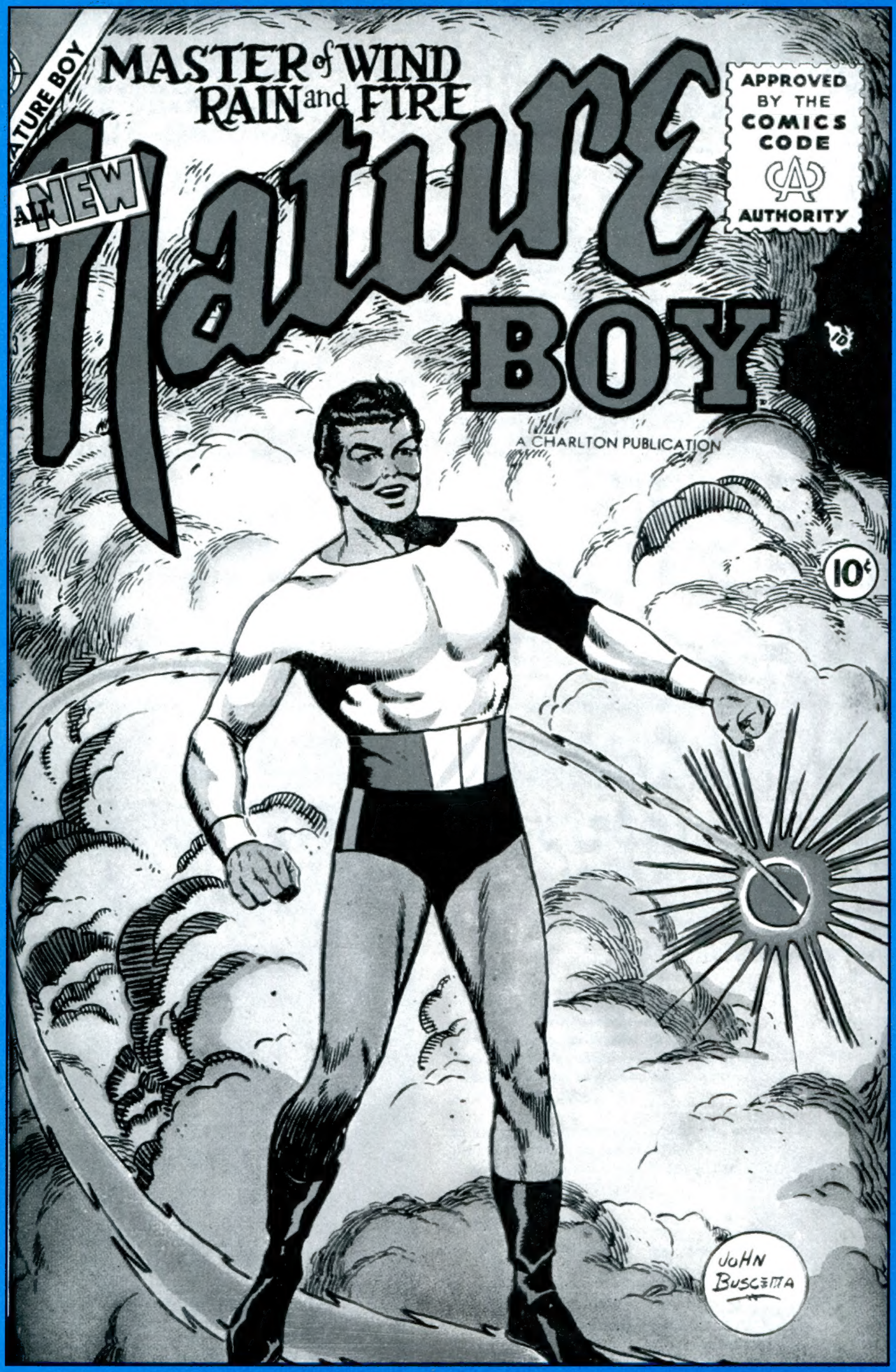

in memory of **John Buscema**
December 11, 1927– January 10, 2002

Nature Boy #3, March 1956 © Charlton Comics Group